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THE

WORKS

OF

GEORGE BULL, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S,

COLLECTED AND REVISED

BY

THE REV. EDWARD BURTON, M.A.

LATE STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

THE LIFE OF BISHOP BULL,

BY

ROBERT NELSON, ESQ.

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY NEW-YORK

VOL. I.

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TO

MRS. ELEANOR DODDINGTON[a],

WIFE TO GEORGE DODDINGTON, ESQ.

ONE OF THE LATE LORDS COMMISSIONERS OF THE ADMIRALTY, AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR THE BOROUGH OF BRIDGWATER IN SOMERSETSHIRE.

MADAM,

THE right reverend author of these Sermons and other Discourses having, upon all occasions, expressed a very high esteem for you, not only as a lady to whom he had the happiness to be nearly related, but as one whose personal virtues and eminent qualifications called for a greater share of his regard, than even the nearest ties of blood can of themselves ever claim, I thought myself obliged to give you as public a testimony of it as I could, by dedicating them to your name.

And I am willing to persuade myself they will meet with a favourable acceptance at your hands; since a lady of your distinguishing sense and known piety cannot but approve of what was so seriously

[a] [She was sole heiress of Henry Bull esq. of Shapwick. *Nelson's Life*, p. 6.]

intended for the service of the church, and the honour of that religion which you profess. For these, Madam, are the ends to which his whole endeavours and studies were directed; and if he had not all the success therein which he himself might desire, he had at least the satisfaction of having done whatever was in his power towards the promotion of them.

But I must not farther enlarge on this subject, how pleasing soever it may be to me, as being conscious to myself that I am in many other respects than that of relation unqualified for the discharge of it. An abler pen has undertaken it, (I mean that worthy gentleman's, to whose great care and pains in this edition I am so much indebted,) and will in the Life do justice to it.

I shall therefore no longer detain you from the entertainment you will meet with in that and the following Sermons and other Discourses, than while I write myself,

Madam,

Your most obedient servant,

And most obliged kinsman,

ROBERT BULL.

TWENTY SERMONS.

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JER. ix. 23, 24.

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ERRATA.

P. 34. note, line 4, *read* In Exod. Hom. VI. §. 6.
67. note x. l. κρείττονί
76. note, line 2 and 3, *read* de Princip. II. 11, 6. p. 106.
88. note, *read* Contr. Cels. I. 51. p. 367.
291. line 25, *for* every *read* very. It is *every* in Nelson's edition: but in Sermon XIX. p. 465, where the sentence is repeated, it is *very*, which is certainly right.
317. line 29, 30, *read* perdition, let
475. line 9, *read* ἀνύμφου.
483. line 29, *read* than nothing.

SERMON I.

THE NECESSITY OF WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN ORDER TO SALVATION; THOUGH THE REWARD OF THEM IS ONLY TO BE EXPECTED FROM THE FREE GRACE AND MERCY OF GOD: ASSERTED AGAINST THE ANTINOMIANS AND PAPISTS.

HOSEA X. 12.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy.

IN the preceding verses of the chapter, God sharply reproves and severely threatens Israel for their wickedness, especially their idolatry. But the good God always in judgment remembering mercy, to those reprehensions and menaces subjoins here in my text an exhortation to repentance and amendment of life, enforced with a gracious promise of mercy upon such repentance.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy. Which words (not to spend time needlessly in any farther preface) I shall first briefly explain, and then raise such plain, practical, and useful observations from them, as they naturally and without straining afford.

First for the explanation of the text. It is obvious to observe in general, that the verse, out of which my text is taken, contains an exhortation to repentance and a good life, expressed under the metaphors of ploughing and sowing; and also a promise of mercy under answerable metaphors of rain upon the seed sown, and of reaping a joyful harvest. *Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy:*

break up the fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. But I am concerned at present to explain only the beginning of the verse, which I have pitched on for the subject of my discourse at this time.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness. The sowing of seed is a metaphor used in Scripture to signify the doing of those moral exercises and works, by which (according as the quality of them is, as they are good or bad) men are to expect from God either reward or punishment. *To sow in righteousness* therefore is nothing else but to live righteously, to do righteous actions, that is, works of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards our neighbour. For righteousness here is not only just and righteous dealing towards men, but it is *virtus universalis*, "an universal virtue," containing in it all other virtues. In this comprehensive sense it is often taken in Scripture; as for example, Psalm xi. 7. *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.* Proverbs xi. 5, 6. *The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way, but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them; but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.* Dan. xii. 3. *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.* Matt. v. 20. *Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And that in this large sense it is to be understood here, is evident, because the exhortation, *Sow in*, or *unto*,

righteousness, requires an universal reformation, conversion, and turning to God. It is a calling of the Israelites to a general repentance, not only of their unjust dealings, but of all those other sins with which God had before charged them. And besides, to the command, *Sow in righteousness*, is presently added in the verse out of which my text is taken, *break up the fallow ground;* where by *the fallow ground* is meant the unregenerate heart, the heart that is void of virtue, and overrun with vice; as it is expressly expounded, Jer. iv. 3, 4. *For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart,* &c. Now to break or plough up the fallow ground of our hearts, is by the exercises of mortification to subdue and root up our vicious inclinations, that so our hearts may be made fit soil, and prepared to receive the seeds of virtue. The sowing therefore in righteousness here commanded, is of a wider extent than to be confined only to works of justice, strictly so called, and signifies the practice of all virtues, for which our hearts, being cultivated by the foremention ed exercises, are fitted and disposed.

Reap in mercy. Where Grotius and others note, that in the Scripture language *Seminare est bene agere; metere referre mercedem;* "To sow is to "do well; to reap is to receive the reward of so "doing."

The words, though they are delivered imperatively, yet are a plain promise; as if it had been said, *Sow in righteousness*, and then you shall *reap in mercy*. For it is usual in Scripture for the

divine promises to be delivered in the imperative mood, to signify, that if that be done which God commands, his promise is sure and certain, and presently performed: there remains no more to do, but, as it were, to put forth the hand and gather the fruit, and receive the effect of the promise: to this purpose see Isaiah lv. 2. *Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

To *reap in mercy* is to receive the reward of righteousness from the free and abundant goodness and mercy of God. Indeed some think, the mercy here spoken of may be understood of human mercy, or the exercise of mercy by men to men; and so that to *reap in mercy* is to receive our reward according to the mercy we have shewn to others. This interpretation (it is confessed) contains a sound truth, and is safe enough; but I choose rather to go with the stream of the most learned interpreters, who expound the mercy here mentioned, of the divine mercy, the mercy of God, the fountain from whence the reward of all our righteousness flows. And certainly the virtue of human mercy is comprehended under that universal righteousness mentioned in the former clause, *Sow to yourselves in righteousness*, and is part of the duty of man there enjoined; but the mercy here mentioned belongs to the promise of reward, or the reaping of the fruit of that righteousness from God, and so is most fitly understood of the divine mercy.

And this may suffice for the explanation of my text, the sense whereof now appears to be this: Do

and practise the works of righteousness, of piety to God, and of justice and charity towards men, and you shall certainly receive the reward of that righteousness from the mercy of God, an abundant reward, suitable to the infinite goodness and mercy of God that bestows it. I now proceed to raise my observations from the text, which are these two:

Observ. 1. We must not expect to reap in mercy, unless we sow in righteousness; that is, we must not hope for the gracious reward which God hath promised, without the practice of those works of righteousness which God hath commanded.

Observ. 2. When we have sown in righteousness, that is, done righteous works, we must not plead any merit of our own in having so done, but must look for the reward of our righteousness only from the free grace and mercy of God.

Of these in their order: and first, of the first. We must not expect to reap in mercy, unless we sow in righteousness, &c.

For the order in my text is to be observed; first, *sow in righteousness*, and then (not before, or otherwise) *reap in mercy.* It would be as absurd for a man to expect that God's mercy should save him without works of righteousness, as for the husbandman to look for a harvest without ever ploughing and sowing his ground. He were a madman in his husbandry that should do this, and he is no less infatuated in his religion that doth the other. The same thing under the same metaphor St. Paul teacheth us, Gal. vi. 7, 8. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to*

the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Which great truth the Scripture delivers in proper terms, when it tells us (as it often doth) that God will *render to, or reward, every man according to his works. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,* saith the divine author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xii. 14. Without a holy life here, no man ought to expect or hope for a happy life hereafter.

God indeed is infinitely good and merciful, and it is out of that infinite goodness and mercy that he bestows the gift of eternal life upon any man; but God is also infinitely wise, and righteous, and holy; and therefore he will not (I think I may say he cannot) confer the rich donative upon any unholy or unrighteous person. St. Paul seems to count it strange that any Christian, any man that hath been taught the truth as it is in Jesus, should either not know, or not believe, or not consider this. For thus he bespeaks his Corinthians, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. *Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God:* as if he had said, Is it possible you should be ignorant of so great a truth as this, so often and so plainly taught you by the Gospel of Christ? Certainly if you know not this, you know nothing in Christianity. And yet, alas! in this our age, how many, among those that call themselves Christians, seem to be wholly ignorant of this great fundamental principle of our religion! A principle more

fundamental (if I may so speak) than any article of our creed; for all those articles are fundamental only in order to this; that is, they are necessary to be believed, because they have an influence upon our practices; and without the belief of them we cannot reasonably live a Christian life. They therefore that are ignorant of or disbelieve the necessity of a holy life, are ignorant of or deny that article, upon the supposition of which the necessity of all other articles of our religion depends. He indeed that thinks himself not obliged by the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, as expounded by our Saviour Christ, may at the same time as reasonably throw away his whole creed. For if it be not necessary to live according to the precepts of Christ, it cannot be necessary to believe any proposition or doctrine in Christianity. If there be no danger in an ill life, there can be no danger in a wrong belief. And yet, I say, how many are there among those on whom the name of Christ is called, and who glory in that name, who seem not yet convinced or persuaded of this great and manifest article! It is a sad truth, (but a truth it is,) that the very principles of Christianity are perverted and corrupted by the professed disciples of that religion, yea (which is yet worse) by the very doctors and teachers of it too. And here

Iliacos intra muros peccatur, et extra.

Protestants and papists are both to blame. To begin with ourselves first. Among us protestants there have been many (too too many) that have taught for pure, yea the purest Gospel, such doctrines as these: "That the faith whereby we are justified, is "nothing else but a recumbence or reliance upon

" Christ, or (which is a worse definition) that it is " only a firm belief and persuasion, that our sins " are already pardoned, and we already justified; " and consequently, that the justification spoken of " in Scripture is nothing else but the sense and " knowledge of our justification past, decreed from " eternity: that Christ obeyed the law, and suffered " in our persons, and that his righteousness is for- " mally ours, and consequently that there is no " necessity of any righteousness in ourselves in order " to our salvation: that the moral law" (though Christ himself hath taken the pains to explain and press it on us) " concerns not us Christians, as a law " obliging us *sub periculo animæ*, 'under penalty of " damnation;' but is only a contrivance to frighten " sinners, to convince them of their sins, and to shew " them their impotence and weakness: that we are " to work, not for life, but from life, as they phrase " it; and consequently, that all our good works are " (after a sort) works of supererogation, to which no " necessity obligeth us, but only gratitude freely in- " clines us." The men that taught these sad propositions were called antinomians; whose name indeed is now every where odious and decried; but the doctrines themselves have taken such deep root in the hearts of the people, (who greedily entertained them, as grateful and pleasing to their carnal appetites,) that multitudes still perish upon the confidence of the same principles. And there being some obscurer places of holy writ, that seem to sound this way, and to favour the forementioned errors, they pertinaciously adhere to them; though there be five hundred texts of Scripture that in the most express and plainest terms teach the contrary. Yet

(God be thanked) I know of no protestant church of any denomination whatsoever, that openly avoucheth any of those doctrines. I am sure, our church of England is far from doing so: they are the errors or heresies, rather of certain, private, and unlicensed doctors, who took occasion to sow their tares, not when our watchmen slept, but when they were by a tyrannical power silenced, and driven from their charges in the time of usurpation. And the same men (when they are now not only not licensed, but themselves forbidden to preach) are the only men that still maintain and strenuously propagate those pernicious doctrines in their schismatical assemblies.

But having done this justice to ourselves, let us next call the papists to account. The church of Rome, I say, the very church of Rome, teacheth and avoweth such doctrine, as evidently and utterly destroys the necessity of a holy life, and encourageth men to hope they shall *reap in mercy*, though they *sow* not to themselves *in righteousness*. Such is that doctrine of theirs, "That a man by attrition, or "such a sorrow for sin as ariseth only from fear, "and is void of charity and the love of God above "all things, with the help of the sacrament of "penance, that is, of confession to and absolution "from a priest, may obtain the pardon of his sins, "justification, and eternal life." This dangerous proposition the council of Trent doth plainly enough assert, in the fourth chapter of the fourteenth session, concerning Contrition. But in the Roman catechism (which was allowed and published by the order of the Trent Fathers and pope Pius the Fifth, and is therefore as much their doctrine as any thing decreed by them in their sessions) it is so manifestly

delivered that there is no room for contradiction, in the fifth chapter of the second part of the Sacrament of Penance. [page 223, and the following, according to the edition of Antwerp, 1606.] The sum of their doctrine there is plainly this, "That true contrition, "joined with the love of God above all things, is "indeed a thing very desirable, and most accept- "able to God, even without the sacrament of pe- "nance: but because very few have this true con- "trition, that therefore God out of his infinite mercy "and indulgence, hath provided for the common "salvation of men in a more easy way." They are the very words of the catechism, wherein the Fathers seem to have forgotten the words of our Saviour, *Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*, Matt. vii. 14. And that therefore he hath appointed the sacrament of penance, as a help or crutch to a lame and defective repentance, as a supply to their contrition and sorrow for sin, wherein the love of God above all things is wanting.

Need I now to shew the danger of this doctrine? It is indeed a doctrine so dangerous, so damnable, that it seems of itself sufficient to unchristian and unchurch any society of men that shall teach and maintain it. It razeth the very foundations of the Gospel: it takes away those two great hinges, upon which (as our Saviour himself tells us) all the Law and Prophets depend and turn, viz. the love of God above all things, and of our neighbours as ourselves, for God's sake. For these, according to this doctrine, are not necessary: the rare device of the sacrament of penance can reconcile men to God without them; and by this expedient, men that never loved God

with all their hearts, in all their days on earth, may for ever enjoy God in heaven. People may expiate their sins at this rate of a servile attrition, *toties quoties*, as often as they commit them, and so be saved without ever having loved God above all things in their lives. But the danger of this doctrine will more evidently appear, if we apply it to such as are *in agone mortis*, at the point of death. Suppose a man to have lived in a course of wickedness for fifty or sixty years, and being now upon his deathbed, to be attrite for his sins, that is, heartily to grieve for them only out of the fear of hell, (and he is a bold man indeed that will not in earnest fear hell, when it gapes upon him, and is ready to devour him,) and in that fear to purpose amendment of life, if God restore him, and to have a hope of pardon; (and in so comfortable a church as the Roman, who hath any reason to despair?) this man, according to the doctrine of the council of Trent, though he cannot be saved without the sacrament of penance, yet with it he may.

If he hath but breath enough to tell the priest the sad story of his vicious life, and beg absolution, he can do wonders for him, more than God himself ever promised: he can by pronouncing only a few words over him, presently translate him from death to life; and make him, that was all his life before a child of the Devil, in one moment the son of God, and an heir of salvation.

Let not therefore the church of Rome boast any more of the strictness and severity of her doctrine; and that she especially presseth good works, and the necessity of a holy life; when it is apparent, that by such loose propositions as these, she utterly destroys

that necessity. Indeed it may be truly affirmed, that there is no society of Christians in the world, where antinomianism and libertinism more reign, than among the papists, into whose very faith they are interwoven, and men are taught them by the definitions of their church. It is no wonder so many vicious persons, especially when they come to die, turn papists, and no visitants are so welcome to them as the Roman confessors. They find them very easy and comfortable doctors for men in their desperate case, and admire their rare invention, who have found out a shorter way to heaven, and a readier one to escape hell and damnation, than the Scriptures ever discovered, or their former ministers of the church of England, following the guidance of the Scriptures, durst warrant to them. And what broken plank, yea what flag or reed will not a drowning man lay hold on? O how pleasant a thing is that which they call the bosom of the Roman church! how willingly do those forlorn wretches cast themselves into it! where they are promised, and in their own deluded imaginations enjoy, that rest and security, which they could not any where else, no not in the word and promises of God, find. But, alas! when they thus say Peace, peace unto themselves, behold, sudden destruction cometh upon them, and within a minute after they are launched out into eternity, a sad and dreadful experience convinceth them what a sorry refuge they fled to.

It is evident, that the church of Rome, in teaching this vile doctrine, aims only at her own interest and advantage, and hath no regard at all to the honour of God and the good of souls. It is absolutely necessary, she saith, for a sinner to make an

auricular confession to, and be absolved by, a priest, though God hath no where said so: but it is not necessary for him to be contrite, or to repent of his sins out of the love of God, though God himself in his own word hath an hundred times said it is. That is necessary for the honour and gain of the priest. The trade of auricular confession must by any means be kept up, because from thence they reap no small gain; and besides by it they govern, not only the silly common people, but great men, and kings and princes, by becoming masters of their secrets. But is not the doctrine of true contrition as necessary for the honour of God? Yes; but the promoting of God's glory in the salvation of souls is the least of their design or business. Indeed it were easy to shew how the whole frame of the religion and doctrine of the church of Rome, as it is distinguished from that Christianity which we hold in common with them, is evidently designed and contrived to serve the interest and profit of them that rule that church, by the disservices, yea and ruin of those souls that are under their government.

What can the doctrine of men's playing an after-game for their salvation in purgatory be designed for, but to enhance the price of the priest's masses and dirges for the dead? Why must a solitary mass, bought for a piece of money, performed and participated by a priest alone, in a private corner of a church, be, not only against the sense of Scripture and the primitive church, but also against common sense and grammar, called a communion, and be accounted useful to him that buys it, though he never himself receive the sacrament, or but once a

year; but for this reason, that there is great gain, but no godliness at all in this doctrine? Why in their public eucharists must the priest only receive in both kinds, and the people be put off with a piece of a sacrament, against the plainest texts of Scripture, and the practice of the catholic church, for at least a thousand years after Christ, (as some of the Romanists themselves have confessed,) but that this tends to the advancement of the honour and estimation of the priest, as being alone qualified to offer up an entire sacrifice of Christ's body and blood? The sacrilegious practice indeed came in first upon the pretence of the doctrine of transubstantiation; but interest afterwards confirmed the practice. Nay their very monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, though it seems to be fallen on by chance, in a most ignorant age, evidently serves the same design.

Again, to what purpose is there feigned a treasury of the merits of saints in the church of Rome, and that under the pope's lock and key, but to fill his treasury with money? And who hath not heard of their indulgences of pardon to the greatest sins and sinners openly set to sale, and made a trade of? I might pursue the argument farther, if time would permit; but this is sufficient to shew, by the way, that gain, not godliness, is the design of the Roman church, yea, that their gain is their godliness, as St. Paul said of some in his time, 1 Tim. vi. 5. And therefore that we are concerned to take heed to what follows in the same place, *from such withdraw*. Indeed Christianity, the best of religions, is, as they have taught it, truly become what one of

their popes is said to have called it, only a gainful fable. But I return thither, from whence I have somewhat digressed.

The church of Rome, I say, falsely glories in her being zealous for good works; seeing, as it appears, she evidently and many ways destroys the necessity of them. And yet very many among us are so foolish as to believe the pretence; yea, and to make the preaching up of good works a character of a papist. He is a papist, say they, for he presseth good works; and hence they themselves sit down in an openly vicious, or a careless conversation, in a life either fruitful of wicked works, or barren of good ones; pleasing themselves with I know not what faith, and esteeming themselves the truest protestants in so doing. But what an honour do they hereby do the papists! What a slur do they cast on the reformed churches! To undeceive these men in this grand mistake, let me inform them of this one thing; that the papists are indeed mighty zealous for external works, and works of their own devising, but the most regardless men in the world of those substantial and truly good works, which God hath commanded. They vehemently urge people to their beads, and the repeating of Ave Marys and Pater Nosters, to external abstinences and penances, (if they find them apt to receive their discipline,) to pilgrimages and offerings at the shrines of saints, to the endowment of monasteries and religious houses, as they call them, to a multitude of superstitious fopperies and ceremonies, that require so much time and care for their performance, as to eat out the very heart and life of true piety. And those that will do this drudgery of theirs, (and what

will not men do to be freed from the hard task of inward piety?) they can easily excuse from the truly good and essential works of religion, yea and persuade them to a presumption of meriting heaven, though in the mean while they are apparently men of unmortified affections and vicious lives; especially if they are zealous for the catholic cause, and against those whom they are pleased to call heretics. Nay if they have this zeal, they will forgive them all the rest. This zeal shall be a fiery chariot, to convey even the murderers of their princes, with Elias, to heaven; and make them canonized for saints, and give them a name in the Roman calendar, as red as the blood they have spilt. It is true, some good men there are in the papacy, and as well as they can, declaring against this wretched corruption of Christianity among them. But the common, current, ruling, and prevailing religion of the church of Rome is certainly such as I have described.

But now the true reformed religion (I am sure that of the church of England) teacheth men the necessity of works truly good, of true contrition for their sins, of mortifying their sinful and carnal affections, of all the substantial works of piety, justice, and charity. It teacheth men not to expect heaven and salvation without these; but yet not to think of meriting heaven by them. It plainly teacheth, that for a man to be a protestant against popery, will not serve his turn, unless he equally protest against the sin and wickedness of the world: that to be a member, by profession, of a reformed church, will not save his soul, unless himself be truly reformed in his life and conversation. And if men after all this live vicious lives, as too too many among us do, they have

not the least countenance from the doctrine of the church wherein they live, but are continually under her severe reprehensions and reproofs, and are not suffered to live quietly in their sins; so that if they perish, it is purely their own fault and folly.

To conclude this matter, it is a very difficult task for men to persuade themselves to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, though they are rightly principled, and convinced of the necessity of so doing. What a case then are they in, whose very principles lead them to a vicious life; whose very minds, understandings, and notions of things, are corrupted; who are not yet convinced of the necessity of a holy life! *If the light within thee be darkness*, saith our blessed Lord, *how great is that darkness!* Matt. vi. 23. It is impossible for men of such ill principles to live well, unless either their understandings be so weak, as not to discern their consequences, (and then their weakness is their happiness,) or else a very strong inclination to virtue, and a mighty grace in them, conquer and overcome the venom and poison of them.

Wherefore, my dear brethren, let no man deceive you with vain words, but hearken to the word of God, which tells you, that you must not expect to *reap in mercy*, unless you *sow to yourselves in righteousness*. Let never either Jesuit or fanatic persuade you to the contrary. Fix and settle in your minds such plain texts of Scripture as these: *Except ye repent, ye shall all perish.* Luke xiii. 3. *Follow peace and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* Heb. xii. 14. *God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who*

by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, &c. *but glory, honour, and peace, to every one that worketh good. For there is no respect of persons with God.* Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. Fix, I say, and settle these and such like places of holy Scripture in your minds and memories, and let no sophistry of men or devils ever baffle or dissuade you from so plain a truth. Nay, let not your own hearts deceive you, as they will be apt to do, either by causing you to divert your thoughts from these express declarations of God's will, or to seek out shifts and evasions to elude them. But often call to mind, meditate, and think on these Scriptures. Let them continually haunt your souls, (if I may so speak,) and never suffer you to be at rest, till you have resolved upon a holy life, and engaged yourselves in it. And then happy, thrice happy shall you be; and after you have sown to yourselves in righteousness, a glorious harvest shall you reap from the mercy of God. And this leads me to the second observation from my text, which I shall briefly despatch, and so conclude.

Observ. 2. When we have sown in righteousness, that is, done righteous works, we must not plead any merit of our own in having so done; but must look for the reward of our righteousness only from the free grace and mercy of God.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy. The reward of the righteous man is every where in Scripture pronounced to be a reward of

grace and mercy. The words of the second commandment are observable, *shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.* They that love God and keep his commandments, all the reward they can hope for is, that God should shew mercy unto them. And there is a great deal of congruity, though they seem strange, in the words of David, Psalm lxii. 12. *Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.* That God rendereth to every man, that is, every righteous man, according to his work, is an act of his mercy. Nehemiah, chap. xiii. reckons up many great and noble works that he had done for the honour and service of God; but that you may see he boasted not in all this, that he had no conceit of any merit in himself, observe how humbly towards the conclusion of the chapter he supplicates for mercy, and such mercy, as whereby God would spare him, that is, not punish him. Ver. 22. *Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.* He counts it greatness of mercy to be spared by God, after all his great good works. In like manner St. Paul, after he had mentioned the frequent acts of charity that Onesiphorus had exercised towards him, prays that God would reward them, in this style; *The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.* 2 Tim. i. 16, 17, 18.

There are two reasons suggested in the text itself, that utterly destroy all conceit of the merit of our righteousness.

1. By our righteousness we give nothing to God; he reaps no advantage from it to himself. If we sow in righteousness, we sow to ourselves, and the harvest

of this righteousness we ourselves reap. *Sow to yourselves, reap ye. My goodness,* saith the Psalmist, *extends not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth,* Psalm xvi. 2, 3. As if he had said, I may and will do good to thy saints, but I can do no good to thee; for I receive all the good I have, or do, from thee. Indeed if we are wicked, we hurt not God, but ourselves; and if we are righteous, the benefit is to ourselves, and not to him. Whatsoever we crawling worms do here on earth, God sits still upon the circle of the heavens, the same perfect, unchangeable, blessed, and happy God for ever and ever. Only he is pleased out of his infinite condescension to look down from heaven, upon those little things we do here out of a hearty desire to glorify him; and in his abundant mercy he will plentifully reward them. We may challenge all who lay such stress upon merit, to answer St. Paul's question, *Who hath first given to him,* that is, God, *and it shall be recompensed to him again?* Rom. xi. 35.

2. The other reason against all merit of our good works, suggested in the very text, is this: there is no just proportion between our works of righteousness, and the reward of them. Our good works are but a few seeds; but the reward is a harvest. *Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy.* The words in the Hebrew are emphatical, *reap* לפי חסד *lephi chesed, according to the measure of mercy.* For *lephi* and *kephi* are in Scripture used to signify the measure or proportion of a thing. Thus Exod. xvi. 21. *Every man gathered* לפי אכלו *lephi o kelo, according to the measure of his eating.* The sense therefore is: He that sows in righteousness shall reap and receive his reward, not according to the small

proportion of the seeds of righteousness that he hath sown, but according to the measure of the divine mercy and goodness, which useth superabundantly to remunerate man's slender performances. And accordingly the learned Drusius thus paraphraseth the words; *in*, or according to, *mercy; benigna, ac pleniore mensura, quam seminastis*, "in a bountiful and "fuller measure than you have sown." As in a good and plentiful year, the harvest or crop that is reaped vastly exceeds the seed sown, every grain yielding many more; so and much more it is here. What poor slender seeds of righteousness do we sow! But O the vast crop and harvest of glory that shall, through the mercy of God, spring and rise out of those seeds! It shall be so great, that when we come to reap it, we ourselves shall stand amazed at it.

To conclude therefore: he that hath sown the seeds of righteousness most plentifully, must look for his harvest of glory only from the mercy of God. He that is richest in good works, must sue for heaven in the quality of a poor worthless creature, that needs infinite mercy to bring him thither; mercy to pardon his sins antecedent to his good works; mercy to forgive the sins and defects in his works; mercy to advance his works (being, though supposed never so perfect, yet finite and temporary) to the possibility of attaining an infinite and endless reward. He must confess with St. Paul, that *eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ*, Rom. vi. 23. That it is the rich purchase of Christ's most precious blood, by which alone a covenant of eternal life was established upon the gracious condition of *faith working by love*; that it was the grace of the divine Spirit promised in the same covenant, that prevented

him, and cooperated with him, and continually assisted and followed him in all his good works: and consequently, that though his crown of glory be *a crown of righteousness*, that is, of God's righteousness, whereby he is obliged to make good his own covenant; yet that it is *a crown of mercy too*, because that covenant itself was a covenant of infinite grace and mercy.

And if the best of men, after all the good works they have done, or can do, need mercy, infinite mercy to save them; what a miserable condition are they in, who have no good works at all to shew; but on the contrary, a large catalogue of wicked works, unrepented of, to account for? We may say in this sense with St. Peter; *If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* 1 Pet. iv. 18. Certainly even the mercy of God cannot save this man, because his holiness will not suffer him. For though our good works are not required to make us capable of meriting heaven, (that being impossible for us;) yet they are absolutely necessary to make us fit objects for infinite mercy to bestow heaven on, or, in the excellent words of St. Paul, *to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.* Col. i. 12.

To which inheritance, God of his infinite mercy bring us, through Jesus Christ:

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be given all honour and glory, adoration and worship, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON II.[a]

THAT THE SOUL OF MAN SUBSISTS AFTER DEATH, IN A PLACE OF ABODE PROVIDED BY GOD FOR IT, TILL THE RESURRECTION.

ACTS i. 25.

That he might go to his own place.

IN the verses before my text, we have an account of the election of a new apostle, in the room of the apostate Judas, who by his defection and miserable death consequent thereon, had rendered the complete and mysterious number of apostles, chosen by our Saviour, uneven, and made a breach in that jury of witnesses, that were to report and testify his resurrection. In this grand affair they first make use of their best judgment, by appointing two persons of the number of the seventy disciples[b], Barsabas and Matthias; either of them, as they conceived, fit for the office, leaving it to their Lord and Master to determine which of the two should be the man, and stand as an apostle. This divine determination they seek for by casting of lots, an ancient way of decision in such cases, used both in the church of

[a] [This and the following Sermon seem to have been written after the eighth, of which they are in a manner the continuation.]

[b] [St. Luke does not expressly say that they were of the number of the seventy disciples, Acts i. 21—23. It is stated by Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. I. 12.]

God and among the Gentiles. But before they go to the decision of this important affair, they betake themselves to their prayers, that God would by his special providence direct the lot; and the event was this, that the *lot fell upon Matthias.*

The office of the person to be elected is described in the verse out of which my text is taken, to be λαβεῖν τὸν κλῆρον τῆς διακονίας καὶ ἀποστολῆς, *to be made partaker of the ministry and apostleship,* that ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell; the sad event of whose fall is said to be this, that *he went to his own place* or state, a place and state fit for so vile a miscreant; that he fell from the highest dignity to the greatest infelicity from the fellowship of the apostles, to the society of devils. *That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.*

Indeed some difference hath been started about the words of my text, whether they are to be referred to Judas mentioned immediately before, or to the new apostle under election. Our learned English paraphrast [c] refers them to the latter, understanding that the new apostle should go and betake himself to his proper place, charge, and province in the apostleship, the words, *from which Judas by transgression fell,* being included in a parenthesis. But this interpretation, besides that it departs from the generally received sense of ancient and modern expositors, (which is prejudice enough against it,) is also many ways incommodious. For first it feigns a parenthesis in the text without any reason at all.

[c] [Hammond, with whom agree Le Clerc and Œcumenius.]

And then it is not so natural to refer the words to a person mentioned at a distance in the context, as to a person named just before. Lastly, this interpretation seems to suppose, that every apostle had his distinct and proper place and province in the apostleship, which is not true. For the apostleship and every part of it was common to every apostle, who might do all the same things in any place, that any other apostle did. Sure I am, there was no such distribution of provinces at the time of this election; for then the apostles executed the same office all in the same place and country, among the Jews, to whom alone they were at first to preach the Gospel of Christ. The dispersion of the apostles into the several heathen nations, as they themselves saw convenient, was not till after the obstinate infidelity of the Jews gave occasion for it. This sense therefore, though foreign, yet is not so strange as some have made it, who have accused the forementioned excellent expositor of singularity, and as being the first author and inventor of it. For the learned Isidore Clarius, in his notes on my text, delivers the same sense, without expressing any the least dislike of it [d]. But yet, I say it is a mistake, and the common interpretation is undoubtedly the right, that Judas having forsaken and betrayed his Lord and Master, brought himself to a most wretched end, (as is before in this chapter related, ver. 16, 17, 18.)

[d] [This is not quite correct: his words are, *Si ad Judam referas, videtur intelligere laqueum quo se dignum judicavit ob proditionem. Sin ad Matthiam, intellige episcopatum cui successit.* Zegerus also referred the words to Judas going and hanging himself. Erasmus and others interpreted them rather of his final punishment, than the intermediate state of his soul.]

and upon his death went to his proper place, the place and state of lost reprobate spirits, and damned souls, a company with which he was far more fit to be numbered, than with the apostles of Christ. And therefore the Alexandrian MS. of venerable antiquity, reads here, *to his due place*[e], that is, to the place and state of misery which he had justly merited and deserved by his wickedness.

Now that this is the true meaning of my text, I shall farther demonstrate, by shewing that the phrase, *to go to one's own place*[f], or *to one's due or appointed place*[g], was a known received phrase in the apostolic age, to signify a man's going presently after death into his proper place and state, either of happiness or misery, according to the life which he had before lived. Polycarp in his epistle to the Philippians, towards the end of it, speaking of the apostles and other martyrs of that age, saith, "That "they are with the Lord, in their due place[h]."

Clement bishop of Rome, of whom St. Paul makes very honourable mention, Phil. iv. 3. and who was therefore ancienter than Polycarp, in his undoubted epistle to the Corinthians, useth the same phrase more than once to the same purpose. For not far from the beginning of that epistle, speaking of the glorious end of St. Peter, he saith, "Thus having "suffered martyrdom, he went to his due place of "glory[i]." The same Clement, presently after in the same epistle, speaking of St. Paul's martyrdom, says,

[e] Εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν δίκαιων.

[f] Πορευθῆναι εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν ἴδιον.

[g] Εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον, or ὡρισμένον τόπον.

[h] Ὅτι εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον αὐτοῖς τόπον εἰσὶ παρὰ τῷ Κυρίῳ. [c. ult.]

[i] Οὕτω μαρτυρήσας ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον τόπον τῆς δόξης. [c. 5.]

"Thus he departed out of the world, and went to "the holy place[k]." So Barnabas (or whosoever was the author of that very ancient epistle going under his name) expresseth the happy departure of good men into the other world, by the phrase of *going to their appointed place*[l]. But the apostolical bishop of Antioch, Ignatius, in his epistle to the Magnesians, not far from the beginning, speaks fully home to our purpose. "There are two things to-"gether set before us, life and death, and every one "shall go to his own place[m]." Lastly, Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, speaks in the same language with his master. For in his fifth book, chap. 31. he says, that the souls of the true disciples of Christ, presently after death, *abibunt in invisibilem locum, definitum eis a Deo, et ibi usque ad resurrectionem commorabuntur:* "shall go into an invisible "place, appointed them by God, and there shall "tarry even until the resurrection." Where the *definitus locus*, "the appointed place," was doubtless in Greek the ὡρισμένος τόπος[n] of Polycarp, and the same with the δίκαιος τόπος, *the due place*, used by the Alexandrian MS. here in my text, of the contrary state of Judas: all which expressions signify the determined proper place or state to which all souls presently after death, good or bad, accordingly go. After so many clear and full testimonies,

[k] Οὕτως ἀπηλλάγη τοῦ κόσμου, καὶ εἰς τὸν ἅγιον τόπον ἐπορεύθη. [c. 5.]

[l] Ὁδεύειν εἰς τὸν ὡρισμένον τόπον. [c. 19.]

[m] Ἐπίκειται τὰ δύο ὁμοῦ, ὅ τε θάνατος καὶ ἡ ζωὴ, καὶ ἕκαστος εἰς τὸν ἴδιον τόπον μέλλει χωρεῖν. [c. 5.]

[n] [The original Greek of this passage is published in the edition of 1710, and the words are τὸν τόπον τὸν ὡρισμένον, as Bull supposed.]

I suppose no man can yet be to seek what is meant in my text by Judas's going after his wretched death, *to his own place* [o].

And having thus explained my text, that I may not detain you too long only with a criticism on the words, I shall now proceed to raise some useful and profitable observations from it, which shall be these two.

Observ. 1. The soul of man subsists after death, and when it is dislodged from the body, hath a place of abode provided by God for it, till the resurrection of the body again.

Observ. 2. The soul of every man, presently after death, hath its proper place and state allotted by God, of happiness or misery, according as the man hath been good or bad in his past life.

Of these propositions I shall discourse in their order; and the first of them will be as much as I shall be well able to despatch within the compass of time at present allotted me: The soul of man subsists after death, &c. And this proposition I shall manage so, as to prove it chiefly by testimonies of the holy Scripture, supposing that I am to deal with men that acknowledge its divine authority, (as having been many a time sufficiently proved to them,) and only question, whether any such doctrine be clearly delivered in it. Of which sort are many professed Christians who believe a resurrection and a life to come, and yet deny the distinct subsistence of the soul after the death of the body; and whilst the body remains in the state of death, that the soul dies and is extinguished with the body; and conse-

[o] Εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν ἴδιον.

quently that the resurrection, which we Christians profess to believe in our creed, is of the whole man both soul and body. Out of the abundance of texts of Scripture, that refute this error, I shall make choice of some few, that do it most clearly and expressly.

And first even in the Old Testament, we have a full testimony given to this truth, that the soul subsists after the death of the body, by Solomon, Eccles. xii. 7. where, describing man's death and dissolution, he saith, *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*[p]. The plain and evident sense of which words is this: Whereas man consists of two parts, body and soul, the condition of these two, when a man dies, will be very different: for the body being at first taken out of the dust of the earth, and so of a corruptible constitution, shall go back into the earth again, and moulder into dust; but the soul, as it is of another and more excellent original, (as being at first inspired immediately by God himself into the body,) shall not perish with the body, but return to that God, from whom it came; in whose hands it shall continue safe and inviolate, according to that of the author of the Book of Wisdom, chap. iii. 1. *But the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and there shall no torment touch them.* For Solomon seems to speak of the end of man according to God's first intention and ordination, which was, that the soul of man, after

[p] [The whole of this passage, "The plain and evident sense—— "universal judgment, ver. 13, 14." is repeated with little variation in Sermon VIII., which appears to have been written first.]

death, should go to God and the heavenly beings; and not of the accidental event of things, happening through man's sin and wickedness, whereby it comes to pass, that the souls of many men, when they die, instead of going to God, go to the Devil and the infernal regions. Though it is true also, that the spirit of every man after death, good or bad, in some sense goes to God, either as a Father, or as a Judge, to be kept somewhere under the custody of his almighty power, in order to the receiving of his final sentence at the last judgment, either of happiness or misery. And accordingly the Wise Man a little after subjoins the article of a future universal judgment, ver. 13, 14.

But if any man yet doubt what Solomon intends here by the soul's returning to God, and not to the earth with the body, let him consult the third chapter of this Book of Ecclesiastes. Where he first declares his thoughts of an impartial judgment of God, that shall happen at a certain determinate time, both to the righteous and the wicked, according to their different works and actions, ver. 17. *I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.* And then in the following verses to the end of the chapter, he expresseth another thought or suggestion, that sometime came into his mind, opposite to the former; or rather he represents the thought of the profane person, viz. that there is no such future judgment; that religion is a vain thing; that there is no difference between the soul of a man and a brute, but that they both perish together with their bodies; and consequently, that it is a man's best course, freely to enjoy what this

present life affords him, and that it is a vain thing to expect any better estate in another world. In which discourse he introduceth the Epicurean (if I may be allowed so to call him by an anticipation) thus deriding the notion of the soul's immortality, ver. 21. *Who knoweth the spirit of a man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?* As if he had said, As for the talk of man's soul being immortal, who can demonstrate that problem? Who can discern any sign of difference betwixt the soul of a man and a brute, that shall prove that the one goes upward to the region of permanent and eternal beings, the other downwards, that is, perisheth together with its body, that moulders in the earth. Certainly hence it is most clear, that the phrase of *man's spirit going upward*, signifies, in Solomon's sense, something directly opposite to the condition of the soul of a beast, that dies together with its body; that is, that it signifies the immortality of man's soul, and its subsistence after the death of the body. Now what Solomon doth here in the beginning of this book question in the person of the Epicurean, whether the spirit of man when he dies doth thus go upward, he doth clearly in the text before cited, towards the end of the same book, (where he expresseth his own most serious and resolved thoughts,) peremptorily determine in these words: *Then shall the dust return to the earth: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

The matter is plain and evident. The New Testament very often and most expressly delivers the same doctrine. Our Saviour, Matt. x. 28. thus exhorts his disciples: *Fear not them which kill the*

body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. What can be more clear? If the soul had such a necessary dependence on the body, that when this dies, itself must needs die with it; then he that kills the body would with the same stroke murder the soul too. But our Saviour tells us, that this is impossible for man to do; the soul remaining even after the death of the body, and being out of the reach of any created power that is able to destroy it. If it be said, that this is meant only of the utter destruction of the soul, which no man is able to effect, God having promised a resurrection to life again; this will appear to be only a wretched shift, to avoid the force of the plainest text. For in this sense our Saviour might have as well denied, that it is in the power of a man to kill the body of another man, that is, to destroy it utterly and finally, because God will raise it again at the last day. But our blessed Lord grants, that the body may be killed by man in the same sense, wherein he denies, that the soul can be destroyed by him; and therefore speaks not this only with reference to the resurrection.

The same our blessed Saviour assures our belief of this truth by his own example, when, being at the point of death, he said, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,* Luke xxiii. 46.

He believed that he had a spirit, a superior soul, that after the death of his body, and the extinction of his animal soul, should still remain; and this he recommends to the gracious and safe custody of his Father. And lest we should think that this was a peculiar privilege of the soul of the Messias, St. Stephen, when dying, after the same manner com-

mits his spirit to Christ himself, then exalted at the right hand of the Father, saying, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*, Acts vii. 59.

Again, how express are those words of Christ to the penitent thief on the cross; *Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise?* Luke xxiii. 43. This certainly is a plain promise to the thief, that on the very same day, wherein he died with Christ, his soul (for his body was to be taken down from the cross, and buried in the earth) should be with Christ in paradise. His soul therefore died not with his body, but, immediately after death, went with Christ's soul to paradise, εἰς τὸν ἴδιον τόπον, *to the proper place*, for so great and illustrious a penitent. The subterfuges and shifts of heretics to evade this text are so perfectly ridiculous, that I must make myself ridiculous if I should mention them, much more if I should go about seriously to refute them.

Farther, we read expressly in the New Testament of separate spirits of men, both good and bad. Of the spirits of good men departed, the divine author of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks, when he tells us, that we Christians are joined not only to an innumerable company of angels, but also to the society of *the spirits of just men made perfect, or that have finished their course*[q], Heb. xii. 23. Of the spirits and souls of wicked men remaining after death St. Peter as expressly speaks, 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. *By which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison; which sometimes were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah*[r], &c. How and when Christ preached to those spi-

[q] [τετελειωμένων.]

[r] [For the opinion of the Ante-Nicene Fathers concerning this

rits in prison, is not my business at present to inquire: but the text plainly enough affirms, that the spirits of those wicked men that were destroyed by the flood were then in being, and in prison too, that is, *in the sad place of Judas*, in the place and state of miserable souls, reserved, as in a gaol or dungeon, to the future judgment and execution.

St. Paul also most plainly teacheth, that a man (that is, his soul) may be absent from his body, and subsist without it, and in a state of separation from it, 2 Cor. v. 8, 9, 10. *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*, &c. The same St. Paul speaks of visions and revelations that he had seen and received in paradise and the third heaven; but whether he saw those visions in or out of his body, he professeth himself doubtful and uncertain, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4. *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.* If the apostle had believed the vain philosophy of

passage, see Hermas, III. sim. 9. c. 16. Irenæus, IV. 27. Clem. Alex. Strom. III. 4. p. 526. et VI. 6. Excerpta Theod. ad fin. Clem. Alex. p. 973. Tertull. de Anima, c. 7, 55. Origen. c. Cels. II. 43. In Exod. §. 6. In Reg. Hom. 2. vol. 2. p. 497. In Psalm. p. 553. Hippol. de Antichristo, §. 26, 45.]

some men, that a man's soul cannot subsist without his body, he might very easily and most certainly have resolved his own doubt, and concluded that he received those visions and revelations in the body, seeing out of the body he could not so much as subsist.

But not to pursue any farther those particular texts of Scripture, that occasionally (and as it were by the by) dropped from the pens of the sacred writers, let us inquire into the whole state of the question concerning the soul's immortality and permanence after death, as it was controverted between the two great sects among the Jews, the Sadducees and Pharisees, in our Saviour's time, and as it was by the apostles of Christ and by Christ himself professedly determined.

The dogmata and tenets of the Sadducees, opposite to the doctrine of the ancient church of the Jews, held by the Pharisees, are very briefly, yet fully enough, expressed by St. Luke, Acts xxiii. 8. *For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.* The Sadducees believed that there is a God, though whether they believed God himself to be incorporeal is not without very great reasons questioned by some. But this is certain, that besides God, they believed nothing at all to subsist, but what is perceptible to sense. And hence they denied angels to be permanent substances, believing the angels of which they had read in Scripture to be only certain phantasms, occasionally formed by God, when he would at any time reveal his will to the sons of men, and afterwards vanishing and disappearing. And agreeably to the same hypothesis, they denied also any such beings as the spirits of men, distinct substances from

their bodies, and able to subsist without them. And hence farther, by a necessary chain of consequences, they denied the resurrection of the bodies of men after death. For to what purpose should the body of man arise, if there were no soul in being, to which it should be reunited, and by which it should be again informed? And how could the same man at the resurrection receive the reward of his past actions, as the Pharisees rightly taught, if his soul did not subsist after death? For every man hath his individuation chiefly from his soul; and *animus cujusque est quisque*, "the soul of every man is the man." If therefore the soul of man itself be extinguished by death, at the raising of our dust, a new soul must be produced by God for every man, and so every man would be another man, and the same men could not receive the rewards and punishments of the world to come, due to their respective actions done in this life, which is the only supposed end of the resurrection. This a learned man more scholastically expresseth in these words: "If the soul be not a per-
"manent substance, but only a quality or crasis,
"which, when the body dies, perisheth and is extin-
"guished with it, it is impossible that the same nu-
"merical man should rise after death; because the
"form or soul which perished, cannot be numerically
"the same with the form or soul which is restored.
"For this is numerically another, because between
"that which perished, and this which is restored,
"there intervened *nihilum*, 'a nonentity.' Now
"whensoever between two extremes, a medium of a
"diverse kind is interposed, those two cannot be nu-
"merically the same, though they may be the same
"specifically. For that is numerically one, which is

" contained in one common term; as that is one line, " which is not cut off or interrupted, and that one " motion, which is not discontinued by rest. But " there is no common term between that which once " was and perished, and that which afterwards is " produced; for non-existence came between them, " and therefore they cannot be numerically the same." Vain therefore would be the expectation of good men, because they themselves should not be rewarded in the resurrection, but others for them.

To this I add, that as a resurrection cannot rightly be defended, unless we assert the permanence and subsistence of man's soul after death; so this being acknowledged, a necessity of the resurrection of his body plainly follows. In order to the demonstration whereof, we are in the first place to observe, that the body is not in man a thing adventitious or superinduced, a thing which at first he was without, and afterward was invested with; (a dream of those men, who hold a preexistence of souls or spiritual beings, afterward, for some fault committed in their primitive state, thrust down into bodies, as into prisons;) but it is an essential part of man. Though the soul be the principal, and by far the most excellent part, (as I have said before,) yet the body too is one constitutive part of that *compositum*, that compounded thing which we call man. For the sacred oracles teach us, that the body of man was a thing made by God in the very first creation and constitution of man; nay, that the body was made before the soul, *God first forming man out of the dust of the earth, and then breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, so that man became a living soul*, Gen. ii. 7. That is, that which was taken out of the earth, and that which

was from without breathed by God into it, made in the whole one living man; the soul being here put for the whole man, as often otherwhere in the holy Scriptures. And the apostle plainly tells us, that the body, as well as the soul and spirit, belongs to the ὁλόκληρον, *the whole* of man, that whole, which he prays may be preserved *blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus*, that is, to the day of judgment, 1 Thess. v. 23. This being established, we thus argue. Seeing the soul of man is permanent, and subsists after the death of the body, and yet the body also belongs essentially to the constitution of man; when that body is defunct, either the soul must remain perpetually in a state of separation, and, as it were, of widowhood, or the body must be recalled to life, and again united to it.

The former hypothesis agrees not to reason. For seeing the soul alone doth not constitute human nature, that being which we call man, if the body utterly perished, would for ever remain as it were an half man, and be destitute of a part of himself. And indeed that he should be so by dispensation, and for a certain time, and for certain causes, is not absurd; but that he should continue so for ever, seems repugnant to the order of things established by the divine wisdom. In a word, if man had not sinned, the union between his soul and body should have been uninterrupted and perpetual, that is, if he had never sinned, he should never have died; but by sin came death, which dissolved the union. Yet by the grace of a new covenant in Christ, that death becomes not perpetual, and man receives a second promise of immortality. In order to which, though his body remain for a while under death, (an irreversible decree being

past, that man should return to the dust from whence he was taken,) yet his soul still subsists, and his body too shall in due time be raised again; and then the breach made by sin shall be fully healed, and the union between soul and body shall never more be dissolved, but the duration of both shall run on in lines parallel. And our Saviour expressly tells us, that *they who shall be accounted worthy of a blessed resurrection, shall not, cannot die any more*, Luke xx. 35, 36.

So necessarily doth a resurrection to judgment, and the soul's subsistence and permanence after death, depend each on the other; and therefore the Sadducees were very consistent in their principles, when they denied both together. And so much for the philosophy of the Sadducees in this matter.

The Pharisees on the other side held a just contrary chain of doctrines, viz. that there are certain immaterial and invisible beings, both angels, and also spirits of men distinct substances from their bodies, and subsisting after the death of their bodies, and therefore that there shall be a resurrection. He that believed one of these hypotheses believed all; and he that denied either of them equally denied the rest. Now St. Luke expressly tells us, that St. Paul openly declared himself to be on the Pharisees' side in this controversy, Acts xxiii. 6. He made indeed this profession at that time politicly, and to save himself from present danger; but yet his profession was honest and true, and void of any deceit or equivocation. And why should St. Luke together with the error of the Sadducees, in denying a resurrection, join their other opinions; that there are no such

things as angels, or spirits of men distinct substances from their bodies, but that he believed these opinions to be equally errors with the former, and indeed to have a necessary connexion with it?

But let us hear the determination of our Lord himself in this controversy; Matt. xxii. 31, 32. *But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.* Where our Saviour proves against the Sadducees, the resurrection of the dead, from the words of God concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, spoken to Moses many ages after the death of those blessed patriarchs, *I am the God of Abraham*, &c. And he lays down this hypothesis as the foundation of his argument, that *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.* Which indeed is an evident proposition, seeing for God to be one's God, necessarily implies a present relation that God hath to him; and no relation can continue, where either of the relatives cease and is taken away. Whence it clearly follows, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were alive, and did subsist (viz. in their spirits) when God spake those words to Moses, that is, many ages after the death of their bodies.

And to this sense of our Saviour's words, doubtless the holy apostolic bishop and martyr Polycarp had respect in his last prayer at the stake, recited by Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. b. iv. c. 15. out of the epistle of the brethren of Smyrna, who were present at his martyrdom. For in the beginning of that prayer, he thus addresseth himself to God: "O thou God of

" the whole race of righteous men, who live before " thee [s]." And having particularly mentioned the martyrs, he presently adds, " Among whom may I " be received before thee this day [t]." So Justin Martyr, in his second Apology, p. 96. (as it is reckoned in the vulgar editions,) tells us, that by what was said out of the bush to Moses, *I am the God of Abraham*, &c. was signified, " That those men " even after death do still remain and subsist [u]." Hence also in the most ancient Liturgies of the church, the place and receptacle of the spirits of just men deceased, is called " the region of the living, " the bosom of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob [x]," as we find it in the Office for the Dead, at large described by the author of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, chap. ult [y]. And from those ancient Liturgies our church hath taken that prayer of hers, which we have in the Office for the Burial of the Dead: " Almighty " God, with whom do live the spirits of just men " that depart hence in the Lord."

Now our blessed Saviour having clearly proved, that the spirits of men can and do subsist after death, had thereby sufficiently confuted the whole doctrine of the Sadducees, without proceeding any farther, considering the connexion of their dogmata or opinions, before mentioned. They denied the subsistence of the spirits of men after death, and therefore denied the resurrection of their bodies: and if

[s] Ὁ Θεὸς πάντες τῷ γένους τῶν δικαίων, οἳ ζῶσιν ἐνώπιόν σου.

[t] Ἐν οἷς προσδεχθείην ἐνώπιόν σου σήμερον.

[u] Ἀποθανόντας ἐκείνους μένειν. [Apol. 1. 63. p. 82.]

[x] Ἡ χῶρα τῶν ζώντων.

[y] [This is one of the works falsely ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite.]

they could have been convinced of the former, they would readily have acknowledged the other also. In a word, they denied in the whole any life after this, any state or subsistence of men after death, and believed death to be *ultima linea rerum*, "the last "line and bound of things," beyond which the concerns of men are no farther extended. I doubt not but this is a true account of our Saviour's reasoning in that famous text, which some learned interpreters have strangely perplexed, for want of attending to the whole connexion of the Sadducees' doctrine above observed. Certainly if our Saviour's reasoning had been so subtle, intricate, and elaborate, as some expositors have made it, it had been impossible for the common people to have understood the force of it. But that the multitude themselves presently apprehended it, and wondered at our Saviour's convincing way of arguing, is expressly affirmed, Matt. xxii. 33. *And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.* The multitude were on the Pharisees' side against the Sadducees, as Josephus and others assure us. This multitude presently conceived the text alleged and urged by our Saviour to be a clear proof, that the holy patriarchs subsisted and lived after the death of their bodies. And they knew this to be an effectual refutation of the whole doctrine of the Sadducees, who held that there is no life after this present life, but that men die as the beasts that perish.

Thus the doctrine of the immortality of man's soul, and its subsistence after the death of the body, appears to be the plain doctrine of Christ and his apostles, delivered in the New Testament. But lest we should yet suspect ourselves to be deceived in

the sense of those evident texts of Scripture, (as some would fain persuade us that we dream when we are awake, and that the sun shines not at the brightest noon,) I add, that the catholic church of Christ after the apostles ever acknowledged the same doctrine, and reckoned it among the undoubted articles of the Christian religion. You have already heard the judgment of those doctors and martyrs of the church, who lived in or very near the apostles' times; how they believed, that the soul of every man presently after death hath a place to go to, and dies not with the body. And the same tradition was constantly held and maintained in the church all along afterwards; insomuch that the doctrine is to be found in the most ancient Liturgies, as hath been above observed; wherein it was unfit that any disputable problem should have a place. Nor would the church ever tolerate or suffer any man, under her government, to teach the contrary opinion.

To pass by the dreams of those infamous heretics the Valentinians; the first (to my best remembrance) that universally affirmed the dissolution of all men's souls together with their bodies, were certain heterodox persons of Arabia, about the middle of the third century, mentioned by Eusebius in his sixth book of Ecclesiastical History, chap. 37. where he tells us that they held, "That the souls of men in this pre-"sent world die and perish together with their bo-"dies; but that at the resurrection they return again "to life, together with the same bodies [z]." Against

[z] Τὴν ἀνθρωπείαν ψυχὴν τέως μὲν κατὰ τὸν ἐνεστῶτα καιρὸν, ἅμα τῇ τελευτῇ συναποθνήσκειν τοῖς σώμασι καὶ συνδιαφθείρεσθαι· αὖθις δέ ποτε κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἀναστάσεως καιρὸν σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀναβιώσεσθαι.

these novelists a great council was presently called, wherein the famous Origen was present; and he by his arguments so effectually dealt with them, that they renounced their error, and so prevented the anathema of the council, that would otherwise certainly have been denounced against them.

I add over and above, that the subsistence of the soul of man after the death of his body, was a tradition generally, nay I think universally, received among the civilized heathen nations. For though certain wrangling and contentious philosophers among them disputed the matter, and by disputing came at last most of them to doubt of it, and some of them flatly to deny it; yet this could not hinder, but that the notion still prevailed among the generality of men in every age and nation. Nay in that part of the world, which for so many ages remained undiscovered and unknown to the rest of the earth, (there being no very ancient historian or writer extant, that gives us any certain account of it,) I say, in that part of the world which is called America, when it was first discovered by the Christians, this faith of the soul's immortality was found to obtain. Joseph Acosta, a learned Spaniard, and an approved author, who had lived in those parts, tells us, l. v. c. 7. that the Indians of Peru believed commonly, "that the "souls of men lived after this present life, [and that "the good were in glory, and the bad in pain."] Nay, in that region of America which is called Nova Francia, New France, although when it was first discovered, the people were found rude and barbarous; insomuch that a good author saith of them, "That they are not bound by any laws, nor observe "any good customs, but live as beasts devoid of

" reason;" yet even of these the same author thus testifieth, " They believe the immortality of men's " souls, and say, that when they leave their bodies, " they go to another region, where their deceased " friends are[a]." Moreover, Lerius[b] tells us of a strange sort of people in America, of a hard name, (they are called by him, *To vou pinam baultii*,) who acknowledge no particular God at all, but only in general, certain spirits with whom their priests converse, from whom they believe themselves to receive courage and success in war, and the production of the fruits of the earth: and therefore they are instanced in by some as a nation atheistical, though unjustly; for those spirits which they acknowledge are their gods. However these very men (as the same Lerius informs us) confess, that " the souls of " the virtuous" (that is, of those who have valiantly defended their country, for this seems to be the chiefest, if not the only virtue which they admired,) " do presently after death fly beyond certain very " high mountains, and at last light on most pleasant " gardens, where they lead a merry life in perpetual " delights and dances: and that on the other side, " the souls of cowards, and degenerate souls, go *ad* " *aygnan*, that is, to the Devil, and live in torments " with him." In a word, I am yet to seek for that nation in the world, among whom the primitive religion, taught by God to the first men, is so utterly

[a] Animarum credunt immortalitatem, dicuntque quod postquam ex corpore migrarunt, tunc in aliam migrant regionem, ubi amici illorum defuncti reperiuntur.

[b] [Historia Navigationis in Brasiliam a Joanne Lerio Burgundo. 1686.]

corrupted and lost, but that they have still some notion remaining among them of the soul's immortality and permanence after death.

To conclude therefore, let us firmly adhere to this confessed truth, this great truth, this fundamental truth, not only of our Christian religion, but of religion in general. Let us take heed of those men, who professing to believe the resurrection promised in the Gospel, do yet deny the subsistence of man's soul in the interval between death and that resurrection. That faith and this denial cannot well stand together; the resurrection of the body necessarily supposing the immortality and permanence of the soul, as I have evidently shewn you. They therefore that deny the latter, lay a sure foundation for the denial of the former too; which is the great article of our religion, the subversion whereof renders our whole faith vain, as the apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 16, 17.

But much more are we to beware of those, who deny this truth with a direct design to destroy all our hopes or fears of any life to come. Let not the sophistry of these men, who study to shake off their Christianity and the religion of mankind at once, in the least unsettle our persuasion and belief of this established verity. It is here, if any where, certain, that *Vox populi* (or rather *populorum*) *est vox Dei*, the voice of all people and nations, howsoever distant in place, however otherwise differing in religion from each other, yet all here singing the same song, must needs be the voice of God; or at least an echo of that voice, by which God spake to holy men in the infancy of the world, and revealed to them the doc-

trine of a future life; a voice once so strongly and convincingly uttered, that it went through all the earth, and to the end of the world; and there is no speech nor language, no people or nation, where the same voice is not still heard; to allude to the words of the Psalmist, Psalm xix. 3, 4. This were sufficient to arm us against the cavils of those few self-opiniated men, that in every age (especially in this of ours) have made it their business to molest and disturb the common faith of the world. But when we have the consent of nations confirmed by a new divine revelation, a revelation proved to be such by the most undeniable arguments, what madness were it to doubt! Let us not therefore give any ear to the voice of the Epicurean, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;* that is, Let us live like beasts, because we are to die as such, 1 Cor. xv. 32; but rather let us resolve to *live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;* because though as to our bodies we may die to-morrow, and must die shortly, yet our souls are certainly to live and subsist after death, in order to a future doom of happiness or misery. Let us hearken to the wisest of men, Solomon; who having asserted the soul's immortality, Eccles. xii. 7. *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it;* presently after, ver. 13, 14. concludes, and his conclusion shall be mine, in these words:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

In the day of which dreadful judgment God shew mercy to us all, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be given all honour and glory, adoration and worship, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON III.

CONCERNING THE MIDDLE STATE OF HAPPINESS OR MISERY, ALLOTTED BY GOD TO EVERY MAN PRESENTLY AFTER DEATH, ACCORDING AS HE HAS BEEN GOOD OR BAD IN HIS PAST LIFE, INCONSISTENT WITH THE POPISH DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY.

Acts i. 25.

That he might go to his own place.

IN my former discourse on this text, having gathered two propositions from it, I fully despatched the first of them, concerning the subsistence and permanence of man's soul after the death of his body. I am now to proceed (with God's assistance) to the other proposition or observation, which was this.

Observ. 2. The soul of every man presently after death hath its proper place and state allotted by God, either of happiness or misery, according as the man hath been good or bad in his past life.

For the text tells us, that the soul of Judas, immediately after his death, had not only a place to be in, but also τὸν τόπον τὸν ἴδιον, *his own proper place*, a place fit for so horrid a betrayer of his most gracious Lord and Master. And I have shewn you, that the apostolic writers were wont to express the different place and state of good and bad men presently after death by this and the like phrases, that they went to their *own proper*, *due*, or *appointed*

places; that is, to places agreeable to their respective qualities, the good to a place of happiness, the wicked to a place and state of misery. If there were one common receptacle for all departed souls, good and bad, (as some have imagined,) Judas could not be said presently after death to *go to his own proper place,* nor Peter to his; but the same place would contain them both: but Judas hath his proper place, and Peter his. And here what avails the difference of place, unless we allow also a difference of state and condition? If the joys of paradise were in hell, hell would be paradise: and if the torments of hell were in paradise, paradise would be hell: Judas therefore is in misery, and Peter in happiness. And what happiness or misery can be there, where there is no sense of either? If presently after death, one common gulph of insensibility and oblivion swallowed up the souls of good and bad alike, the state of Judas and Peter would be the same. The result of all which is manifestly this, that the souls of men do not only subsist and remain after the death of their bodies, but also live and are sensible of pain or pleasure in that separate state; the wicked being tormented at present with a piercing remorse of conscience, (that sleepy lion being now fully awakened,) and expecting a far more dreadful vengeance yet to fall on them; and on the other side, the good being refreshed with the peace of a good conscience, (now immutably settled,) and with unspeakable comforts of God, and yet joyfully waiting for a greater happiness at the resurrection. And to prove this more fully will be my business at this time. Indeed I have been constrained occasionally to intermix some-

what of this argument in my former discourse on this text: but it is a subject worthy of a distinct and more copious handling.

There are some who grant, that the soul of man is a distinct substance from his body, and doth subsist after the death thereof; but yet they dream, that the soul in the state of separation, is as it were in a sleep, a lethargy, a state of insensibility, having no perception at all, either of joy or sorrow, happiness or misery. An odd opinion, which seems altogether inconsistent with itself. For how can the soul subsist and remain a soul, without sense and perception? For, as Tertullian somewhere truly saith, *vita animæ est sensus*, "the life of the soul "is perception." Wherefore, to say an insensible soul, seems a contradiction in terms. It is true, whilst our souls are confined to these bodies, they can have no distinct perception of things without the help of fancy and those corporeal ideas, and, as it were, images of things impressed on it, which being seated in the body, must necessarily die and perish with it. But yet even now we find, that the soul being first helped by imagination, may at length arrive to a perception of some most certain conclusions, which are beyond the reach of imagination. We may understand more than we can imagine; that is, we may by reason certainly collect, that there are some things really existing, whereof we can frame no idea or phantasm in our imaginations. Thus, I am most certain, that there is a Being eternal, that hath no beginning of existence, though I can never be able to imagine a thing, without attributing some beginning of existence to it. A phantasm of eternity I can never have; but that

there is something eternal, I say, I can thus by reasoning demonstrate. Either there is something eternal, that had no beginning, or else it will necessarily follow, that there was a time or space (let it be never so many millions of ages ago, it matters not) when nothing existed. If every being whatsoever had a beginning, before which it was not, then there was a space or time (I may have leave to call it so, for want of a fitter word) when no being at all was. He is a man of a desperately lost understanding, that doth not clearly perceive the evidence of this consequence. Now if ever there was a time when nothing at all was, then nothing ever could have been; for by nothing, nothing could be produced. But we are sure that we ourselves exist, and many other beings; therefore there is an eternal Being, that had no beginning of existence, and by which all other beings that are not eternal do exist. After the same manner we can demonstrate divers other propositions, which are beyond the comprehension of our imagination. We have therefore a faculty or power within us superior to imagination; and of this we affirm, that it shall still remain, act, and operate, even when this grosser imagination of ours ceaseth, and is extinguished.

If it be inquired, in what way the soul perceives, when out of the body, whether by the help of some new subtiler organs and instruments fitted to its present state, which either by its own native power given in its creation it forms to itself, or by a special act of the divine power it is supplied with, or whether without them; I must answer with St. Paul in a like case, 2 Cor. xii. 2. *I cannot tell; God knoweth*[a].

[a] Οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ Θεὸς οἶδεν.

And if any man shall laugh at this ingenuous confession of our ignorance, his laughter will but betray his own ignorance and folly. For even now we can scarce explain how we see or hear, how we think or understand, how we remember least of all; though we have continual experience of all these operations in ourselves. And must it be thought strange, that we cannot tell how our souls shall understand and operate, when out of our bodies, that being a state of which we never yet had any experience? Indeed whilst our souls are wrapped in this flesh, we can no more imagine how they shall act when divested of it, than a child in the womb (even though we should suppose it to have the actual understanding of an adult person) can conceive, what kind of life or world that is, into which it is afterward to be born. Or (to use another similitude) we can now no more conceive the manner of the soul's operation, when absent from the body, than a man born blind, that never saw the light, can understand a discourse of colours, or comprehend all the wonders and mysteries of the optic science. But the thing itself, that the soul in the state of separation hath a perception of things, and by that perception is either happy or miserable, is ascertained to us by divine revelation, of which we have all reasonable evidence, that it is indeed divine, and without the guidance of which, all our best philosophy in this matter is precarious and uncertain.

It was an assertion of the great Verulam[b], that all inquiries about the nature of the reasonable soul

[b] Advanc. of Learn. IV. 3.

" must be bound over at last unto religion, there to " be determined and defined; for otherwise they still " lie open to many errors and illusions of sense. For " seeing that the substance of the soul was not de- " duced and extracted in her creation from the mass " of heaven and earth, but immediately inspired from " God; and seeing the laws of heaven and earth are " the proper subjects of philosophy; how can the " knowledge of the substance of the reasonable soul " be derived or fetched from philosophy? But it " must be drawn from the same inspiration from " whence the substance thereof first flowed." Let us therefore hear what the divinely inspired writers, especially of the New Testament, and the doctors of the primitive church, by tradition from them, have taught us in this matter. And here most of those texts, which we have alleged for the proof of the former proposition, will also serve for the confirmation of this second. We have heard our Saviour himself; but lest we should be thought to have misunderstood him, let us next hear his apostles in this question.

St. Paul, who had been caught up into the third heaven, and also into paradise, which the Scriptures tell us is the receptacle of the spirits of good men, separated from their bodies, and therefore was best able to give us an account of the state of souls dwelling there: he assures us, that those souls live and operate, and have a perception of excellent things. Nay, in the very same text where he speaks of that rapture of his, viz. 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4. he plainly enough confirms this hypothesis. For first, when he there declares himself uncertain, whether he received those admirable visions he speaks of in or out of the

body, he manifestly supposeth it possible for the soul, when out of the body, not only to subsist, but also to perceive and know, and even things beyond the natural apprehension of mortal men. And then when he tells us that he received in paradise visions and revelations, and heard there ἄρρητα ῥήματα, *unspeakable words, not lawful* (or rather not possible) *for man to utter*[c]; he directly teacheth, that paradise is so far from being a place of darkness and obscurity, silence and oblivion, where the good spirits, its proper inhabitants, are all in a profound sleep, like bats in their dark winter quarters; (as some have vainly imagined;) that on the contrary it is a most glorious place, full of light and ravishing vision, a place where mysteries may be heard and learnt far surpassing the reach of frail mortals. Lastly, the glories of the third heaven, and of paradise too, seem to be by an extraordinary revelation opened and discovered to St. Paul, not only for his own support under the heavy pressure of his afflictions, but also that he might be able to speak of them with greater assurance to others. And the order is observable. First he had represented to him the most perfect joys of the third, or highest heaven, of which we hope to be partakers after the resurrection; and then, lest so long an expectation should discourage us, he saw also the intermediate joys of paradise, wherewith the souls of the faithful are refreshed until the resurrection; and for our comfort he tells us, that even these also are inexpressible.

The same blessed apostle, when in the flesh, tells us, that he desired *to depart, and to be with Jesus*

[c] [So says Origen, (or rather Rufinus,) de Princip. II. 7. §. 4. *non licet* pro *non potest.*]

Christ, which is far better, Phil. i. 23. Where if any man shall doubt what is meant by ἀναλῦσαι, which we translate *to depart*, the phrase is clearly explained by the following opposition, ver. 24. *Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you* [d]. Whence it is plain, that ἀναλῦσαι, *to depart*, is to depart from the flesh, that is, this mortal body, that is, to die. Now how could the apostle think it better for him (yea *by far the better* [e]) to depart from the body, than to remain in it, if when he should depart from the body, he should be deprived of all sense, and sink into a lethargy, and utter oblivion of things? Is it not better to have the use of our reasoning faculty, than to be deprived of it? Is it not better to praise God in the land of the living, than to be in a state, wherein we can have no knowledge of God at all, nor be in any capacity of praising him? Besides, the apostle doth not desire to depart from the flesh, or to die, merely that he might be at rest, and freed from the labours and persecutions attending his apostolic office; which is the frigid and dull gloss of some interpreters on the text, but chiefly in order to this end, that he might *be with Christ*. Now certainly we are more with Christ whilst we abide in the flesh, than when we depart from it, if when we are departed, we have no sense at all of Christ, or of any thing else.

Let us hear the same apostle again, 2 Cor. v. 6, 7, 8. *Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home* (or rather conversant) *in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and*

[d] Τὸ ἐπιμένειν ἐν τῇ σαρκί.

[e] Πολλῷ μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον.

willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present (or conversant) *with the Lord.* Where two things are in the first place to be observed: 1. That the apostle doth here undeniably speak of that state of the faithful which presently commenceth after death, and not of that only which follows the resurrection. For he expressly speaks of them as in the state of separation, when they are *absent from the body*[f]. 2. That the apostle speaking to the faithful of Corinth in general, joins them together with himself, speaking all along in the plural number, *we are confident,* &c. and thereby signifies, that he speaks not of a privilege peculiar to himself, and some few other eminent saints like himself; but of the common state and condition of the faithful presently after death. Which two things being premised, the text alleged plainly teacheth us this proposition: That the faithful when they are absent from their bodies, that is, departed this life, are present with the Lord, and that in a sense wherein, whilst they were present in their bodies, they were absent from the Lord. And what sense, I pray, can that be, unless this, that, when present in their bodies, they did not so nearly enjoy Christ, as now, when absent from their bodies, they do? No sophistry can possibly reconcile this text with their opinion who affirm, that the souls of the faithful, during the interval between death and the resurrection, are in a profound sleep, and void of all sense and perception.

But let us at length hear the Lord Jesus himself, who came down from heaven, and therefore knew most certainly the whole economy of the heavenly

[f] Ἐκδημοῦντες ἐκ τοῦ σώματος.

regions; and who upon the account of his omniscient and omnipresent deity, as perfectly knew the miserable state of those spirits, who dwell in the opposite regions of darkness. He, when he was dying, made this promise to the repenting thief that was crucified with him, *To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise*, Luke xxiii. 43. where (as learned interpreters have observed) Christ promiseth more than he had been asked. The penitent thief's request was, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.* To which our Saviour answers, Thou askest me to remember thee hereafter, when I come into my kingdom; but I will not put off thy request so long, *but on this very day* I will give thee a part and the first fruits of that hoped-for felicity; die securely, presently after death divine comforts wait for thee.

To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise. Paradise? What place is that? Surely every man that hath heard of it conceives it to be a place of pleasure. And hence it is proverbial among us to express a very pleasant and delightful place by calling it a paradise. Into this place our Saviour promiseth the thief an admission *on the very day* that he died and was crucified with him. Now to what purpose was it told him, that he should on *that day* be an inhabitant of paradise, unless then he should be capable of the joys and felicities of that delightful place? Paradise would be no paradise to him, that should have no sense or faculty to taste and perceive the delights and pleasures of it. But that we may not discourse uncertainly, let us consider, that the person to whom our Saviour spake these words was a Jew, and that our blessed Lord, speaking in kindness to him, intended to be understood by him. We are therefore

to inquire, what the notion of the ancient Jews was concerning paradise, and the persons inhabiting there.

Paradise among the Jews primarily signified גן עדן *Gan Eden*, "the garden of Eden," that blessed garden wherein Adam in his state of innocence dwelt. By which, because it was a most pleasant and delightful place, they were wont symbolically to represent the place and state of good souls separated from their bodies, and waiting for the resurrection; whom they believed to be in a state of happiness, far exceeding all the felicities of this life, but yet inferior to that consummate bliss which follows the resurrection. For they distinguished paradise from the third heaven, as St. Paul also, being bred up in the Jewish literature, seems to do in the above-cited text, 2 Cor. xii. where he speaks of several visions and revelations that he had received, one in the third heaven, another in paradise. Hence it was the solemn good wish of the Jews (as the learned[g] tell us from the Talmudists) concerning their dead friend, "Let his soul be in the garden of Eden," or, "Let his soul be gathered into the garden of Eden." And in their prayers for a dying person, they used to say, "Let him have his portion in paradise, and "also in the world to come." In which form, "pa-"radise" and "the world to come" are plainly distinguished. According to which notion, the meaning of our Saviour in this promise to the penitent thief is evidently this: that he should presently after his death enter with him into that place of bliss and

[g] Vid. Grot. in locum.

happiness, where the souls of the righteous, separated from their bodies, inhabit, and where they wait in a joyful expectation of the resurrection, and the consummation of their bliss in the highest heaven. For that our Saviour here did not promise the thief an immediate entrance into that heaven, the ancients gathered from hence, that he himself, as man, did not ascend thither till after his resurrection, as our very creed informs us; which is also St. Austin's argument in his fifty-seventh Epistle.

The texts of Scripture hitherto alleged speak indeed only of the souls of good men: but by the rule of contraries we may gather, that the souls of the wicked also in the state of separation are sensible, sensible of great anguish and torment at present, and being in a dreadful expectation of a far greater torment yet to come. Let us hear our Saviour again plainly describing both states of separated souls in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar, Luke xvi. 22—25. *And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell* (in hades) *he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* Here Lazarus is expressly said presently after his

death to be in Abraham's bosom, and comforted there; and the rich man immediately after his death to be tormented in hades.

It is true this is a parable, and accordingly several things in it are parabolically expressed: but though every thing in a parable be not argumentative, yet the scope of it is, as all divines acknowledge. Now it plainly belongs to the very scope and design of this parable, to shew what becomes of the souls of good and bad men after death. And we have already heard from our Saviour's own mouth, that one part of the parable concerning the comfortable state of good souls in Abraham's bosom, or paradise, immediately after death, is true and real; and therefore so is the other concerning the souls of the wicked.

Add hereunto, that our Saviour spake this parable also to the Jews; and that therefore the parable must be expounded agreeably to the ancient Cabala or tradition received among them concerning the state of separate souls. Now whereas our Saviour saith of the soul of Lazarus, that immediately after his death it was conveyed by angels into Abraham's bosom; we find it was also the belief of the Jewish church, before our Saviour's time, that the souls of the faithful, when they die, are by the ministry of angels conducted to paradise, where they are immediately placed in a blissful and happy state. For the Chaldee paraphrast on Cant. iv. 12. speaking of the garden of Eden, (that is, paradise,) saith, that thereinto "no man hath power of entering but the "just, whose souls are carried thither by the hands "of angels." If this had been an erroneous opinion of the Jews, doubtless our Saviour would never have

given any the least countenance to it, much less would he have plainly confirmed it, by teaching the same thing in this parable.

These testimonies of holy writ (to omit divers others) clearly enough prove what we have alleged them for. But for our farther confirmation, and to leave no ground of suspicion that we have misunderstood or misapplied them, let us in the next place hear what the approved doctors of the church, that were the disciples and scholars of the divinely inspired apostles, and the nearer successors of these, have delivered concerning this matter. Now I do affirm the consentient and constant doctrine of the primitive church to be this: that the souls of all the faithful, immediately after death, enter into a place and state of bliss, far exceeding all the felicities of this world, though short of that most consummate perfect beatitude of the kingdom of heaven, with which they are to be crowned and rewarded in the resurrection: and so on the contrary, that the souls of all the wicked are presently after death in a state of very great misery, and yet dreading a far greater misery at the day of judgment. And here in the first place would it not be highly worth the while to understand the faith in this question of a cotemporary, familiar, and fellow-labourer with the apostles, and a most approved one too, canonized and sainted even while on earth, by the great apostle St. Paul[h], and himself called by the ancients[i] an apostle, and that delivered in a writing or epistle, used to be read in the public assemblies of the primitive church, together with the holy Scriptures of the New

[h] Phil. iv. 3. [i] [Clem. Alex. Strom. IV. 17.]

Testament? Doubtless one clear and full testimony of such an author, out of such a writing, is more precious than gold, worth a thousand sentences of our later most celebrated doctors. St. Clement therefore, in his undoubted Epistle to the Corinthians [k], chap. 50. thus writes of the place and state of all faithful souls presently after death.

"All the generations from Adam to this day are "past and gone: but they that have finished their "course in charity, according to the grace of Christ, "*possess the region of the godly* [l], who shall be "manifested in the visitation of the kingdom of "Christ. For it is written, *Enter into thy cham-* "*bers, for a very little while, till my wrath and* "*fury be passed over: and I will remember the* "*good day, and will raise you again out of your* "*graves.*"

Where he assigns but one place to the souls of all good men deceased since the beginning of the world, and he calls it *the region of the godly*, and understands it to be a safe and comfortable refuge, shelter, or hiding-place for them till the visitation of the kingdom of Christ, that is, till the resurrection and final judgment.

But where are we to seek that text of Scripture, which St. Clement applies to this purpose? I answer, we may find, though not exactly the words, yet the sense of it, Isai. xxvi. 19. *Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.* And ver. 20. *Come, my people, enter*

[k] Edit. Coteleril. [l] Ἔχουσιν χώραν εὐσεβῶν.

thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. Where that the words of the 19th verse were by the Jews before our Saviour's time mystically understood of the real and proper resurrection of the dead at the last day, is certain from the Chaldee paraphrast on the place. And it is as certain, that the chambers of God's people in the 20th verse were by the ancient Jews also mystically expounded of the receptacles of the souls of the righteous till the resurrection. For in the second apocryphal book of Esdras, (as we number it,) chap. iv. 35, 36. after some curious questions propounded by the author to his angel, concerning the state of the world to come, the angel is brought in thus answering: *Did not the souls also of the righteous ask questions of these things in their chambers, saying, How long shall I hope on this fashion? When cometh the fruit of the floor of our reward? And unto these things Uriel the archangel gave them answer, and said, Even when the number of seeds is filled in you;* that is, when the number of God's elect is accomplished, as our church expresseth it in the Office of the Burial of the Dead. To the same purpose speaks St. John in the Revelation, chap. vi. 9, 10, 11. *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should*

rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

But to return to St. Clement again: *the region of the godly*, where all the faithful deceased from the beginning of the world inhabit, of which he here speaks, he in the beginning of his Epistle (as was observed at first in the explanation of my text) calls with reference to St. Peter, one of that number, *the place of glory*[o]; because, according to the exposition of the Clementine Liturgy, of which I shall give you an account presently, they that are there behold the glory of Christ, though not in that full brightness wherein it shall be seen at the day of his glorious appearance. And presently after, he terms the same place, speaking of St. Paul there, *the holy place*[p], not the *most* holy place. For he seems to allude in that expression, as otherwhere in the same Epistle he doth, to the temple at Jerusalem, which at the time of his writing it was yet standing[q]; wherein there was *the sanctuary*, or *holy place;* and within it the *sanctum sanctorum, the holy of holies*, both figures of the heavenly things. He altogether seems therefore to have thought *the region of the godly deceased*, to be a part of the heavenly regions, as the sanctuary was a part of the temple; and near to the highest region of the heavens, as the sanctuary was near the holy of holies. But I dare not venture too far into these curious and abstruse questions. Only I note, that upon this account some of the Fathers, as St. Cyprian; St. Ambrose, and others, stuck not to

[o] Τόπον τῆς δόξης. [c. 5.]

[p] Τὸν ἅγιον τόπον. [ib.]

[q] [This is not now the opinion of the learned. See Lardner.]

call the place of the separate spirits of good men, by the name of *heaven*, or *the heavens*, meaning, as it appears[r], not the *aditum*, or inmost apartment of the heavens, where *the throne of the majesty on high* is seated, and the φῶς ἀπρόσιτον, *the unapproachable light* shines; but a heavenly mansion near to it. Whence also the ancient Hebrews were wont to say of the separate spirits of the righteous, that they are *under the throne of glory*.

But again, as to St. Clement's *region of the godly*, where the spirits of all the faithful deceased from the beginning of the world inhabit, we have a clearer account of it in the Clementine Liturgy in the Office for the Dead[s]; where the entrance of good souls into that state of bliss, which presently succeeds death, is said to be their admission "into the region of the "godly released from their bodies; into the bosom of "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of all those that "have pleased God, and obeyed his will from the be-"ginning of the world: where all sorrow, grief, and "mourning is banished[t]." And presently after the same region is called "the land of those that see there "the glory of Christ[u]."

Of the same *region of godly souls* Justin Martyr plainly speaks in his Dialogue with Trypho, not very far from the beginning of it: where, among the ca-

[r] Vid. Ambros. de Bono Mortis, cap. 10, 11. et eundem ad Michæam, obs. 2.

[s] Vid. Constit. Apost. VIII. 41. [Bull could hardly have considered the Apostolical Constitutions to have been the work of Clement. They were probably written in the third or fourth century.]

[t] Εἰς χώραν εὐσεβῶν ἀνειμένων.

[u] Τῶν ὁρώντων ἐν αὐτῇ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

tholic doctrines taught him when he first became Christian, he delivers this for one, "That the souls "of the godly" (after death till the resurrection) "remain in a certain better region, and unrighteous "and wicked souls in an evil one[x]." And yet the same Justin Martyr in the same book, p. 307. condemns it as an error in the Gnostics, that they held, "That as soon as they die, their souls are received "up into heaven[y]," i. e. the highest heaven.

Remarkable is the catholic consent here. Even those doctors of the church, that fancied the place of godly souls to be I know not what subterraneous region; being led into that error (for such I take it to be) by the ambiguity of the Greek word ἅδης, yet acknowledge the godly souls there to be in a very happy condition. So that, though they differed from other doctors of the church, as to the situation (if I may so speak) of the place of the separate spirits of good men, yet as to their state, they well enough agreed with them. Thus Irenæus is known expressly to have delivered that opinion in his fifth book, chap. 31. Yet the same Father in his second book[z], chap. 63. from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, concludes, "that every sort of men" (i. e. both good and bad) "receive their deserved habitation even be-"fore the judgment[a]." And he somewhere tells us, "that the souls in paradise begin there their incor-

[x] Τὰς μὲν τῶν εὐσεβῶν ψυχὰς ἐν χρείττονί τοι χώρῳ μένειν, τὰς δὲ ἀδίκους καὶ πονηρὰς ἐν χείρονι. [c. 5. p. 107.]

[y] Ἅμα τῷ ἀποθνήσκειν, τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν ἀναλαμβάνεσθαι εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν. [c. 80. p. 178.]

[z] [See the passage quoted at p. 27.]

[a] Dignam habitationem unamquamque gentem percipere etiam ante judicium. [c. 34. p. 168.]

"ruptible state[b]," viz. of bliss. Again, in his fifth book, chap. 36. he expressly indeed distinguisheth paradise from the kingdom of heaven, and reckons it a lower degree of happiness "to enjoy the delights of para-"dise[c]," than "to be counted worthy to dwell in hea-"ven[d]." But yet he acknowledgeth in both our Saviour shall be seen, "according as they shall be worthy "or meet who see him[e]." Which the author of the Questions and Answers to the Orthodox, in his answer to quest. 75. thus explains, "That the souls in paradise "do enjoy the conversation and sight of angels and "archangels, *and also of our Saviour Christ by way* "*of vision*[f];" viz. such in its kind, though in degree far more excellent, as whereby the prophets saw him of old. But to return to Irenæus, he concludes his discourse in that chapter thus; that it is the divine ordination and disposition, that those that are saved should *per gradus proficere*, "proceed by degrees" to their perfect beatitude: that is, that they should, as St. Ambrose speaks[g], "through the refreshments "of paradise, arrive to the full glories of the hea-"venly kingdom[h]."

Tertullian also in his Apology, c. 47. when he was yet orthodox, calls paradise "a place of divine pleasant-"ness, appointed to receive the spirits of the saints[i]."

[b] Justos qui sunt in paradiso, auspicari incorruptelam.

[c] Τῆς τοῦ παραδείσου τρυφῆς ἀπολαύειν. [p. 337.]

[d] Καταξιωθῆναι τῆς ἐν οὐρανῷ διατριβῆς.

[e] Καθὼς ἄξιοι ἔσονται οἱ ὁρῶντες αὐτόν.

[f] Κατ' ἐπτασίαν δὲ καὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος Χριστοῦ. [in ed. Just. Mart. p. 470.]

[g] Ad Michæam, observ. 2.

[h] Per paradisum ad regnum pervenire.

[i] Locum divinæ amœnitatis recipiendis sanctorum spiritibus destinatum.

Nay, in his book *of the Soul*[k], which he wrote after he was seduced into the heresy of Montanus, though he so far contradicts his former sentiments, as to lock up paradise, and place a flaming sword at the gate of it, against all but the souls of martyrs, and discourseth very oddly of the place and state of other good souls; yet he plainly signifieth that the catholics of his time, against whom he wrote, were of a contrary belief: and he is forced at last himself to confess, that the good souls in that subterraneous region that he speaks of, do enjoy a happiness not to be despised, that they do "in the bosom of Abraham re-"ceive the comfort of the resurrection to come[l];" that is, that they are at present in a state of rest and happiness, and live in a sure and certain hope of a greater happiness at the resurrection. So that his contention with the catholics in this question savours of a delight that he had to pick quarrels with them, and seems to be a mere strife of words, whilst in the main he acknowledged the thing itself which they affirmed[m].

Now to proceed, from what hath been said, it appears that the doctrine of the distinction of the joys of paradise, the portion of good souls in their state of separation, from that yet fuller and most complete beatitude of the kingdom of heaven after the resurrection, consisting in that clearest vision of God, which the holy Scriptures call seeing him *face to face*, is far from being popery, as some have igno-

[k] De Anima, c. 55.

[l] In Abrahæ sinu expectandæ resurrectionis solatium capere.

[m] [Tertullian's opinions on this subject may also be seen, de Resur. Carnis, c. 17, 43. adv. Marc. IV. 34.]

rantly censured it; for we see it was the current doctrine of the first and purest ages of the church. I add, that it is so far from being popery, that it is directly the contrary. For it was the popish convention at Florence, that first boldly defined against the sense of the primitive Christians, "That those souls, "which having contracted the blemish of sin, are ei-"ther in their bodies or out of them purged from it, "do presently go into heaven, and there clearly behold "God himself, one God in three persons, as he is[n]." And this decree they made, partly to establish their superstition of praying to the saints deceased, whom they would needs make us believe to see and know all our necessities and concerns *in speculo Trinitatis*, "in the glass of the Trinity," as they call it, and so to be fit objects of our religious invocation; but chiefly to introduce their purgatory, and that the prayers of the ancient church for the dead might be thought to be founded on a supposition, that the souls of some faithful persons after death go into a place of grievous torment, out of which they may be delivered by the prayers of the church, always provided there be a sum of money, either left by themselves, or supplied by their friends for them. A gross imposition, that hath been, I am persuaded, the eternal ruin of thousands of souls, for whom our blessed Lord shed his most precious blood, who might have escaped hell, if they had not trusted to a purgatory.

[o] The prayers for the dead, used in the ancient church, (those I mean that were more properly

[n] Illas animas quæ post contractam peccati maculam, &c.

[o] [The bishop copied the whole of this paragraph into his *Answers to the Queries of the Bishop of Meaux.*]

prayers, that is, either deprecations or petitions,) were of two sorts; either the common and general commemoration of all the faithful deceased at the oblation of the holy eucharist, or the particular prayers used at the funerals of any of the faithful lately deceased[p]. The former respected the consummation of bliss at the resurrection, like as that which our church useth both in the Office for the Communion, and in that for the Burial of the Dead; which indeed seems to be no more than what we daily pray for in that petition of the Lord's Prayer, (if we rightly understand it,) *Thy kingdom come.* The latter were also charitable omens and good wishes of the faithful living, as it were accompanying the soul of the deceased to the joys of paradise, of which they believed it already possessed, as the ancient author of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, in the last chapter of that book, plainly informs us. In a word, let any understanding and unprejudiced person attentively observe the prayers for the dead in

[p] [The following expressions may be found in the Ante-Nicene Fathers. Oblationes pro defunctis, pro natalitiis annua die facimus. *Tertul. de Corona*, c. 3. Enimvero et pro anima ejus orat, et refrigerium interim adpostulat ei, et in prima resurrectione consortium, et offert annuis diebus dormitionis ejus. *Ib. de Monogamia*, c. 10. Sacrificia pro eis semper offerrimus quoties martyrum passiones et dies anniversaria commemoratione celebramus. *Cypr.* ep. 34. Dies eorum quibus excedunt annotate, ut commemorationes eorum inter memorias martyrum celebrare possimus. *Ib.* ep. 37. . . . . et celebrentur hic a nobis oblationes et sacrificia ob commemorationes eorum. *Ib.* Si quis istinc nostrum prior divinæ dignationis celeritate præcesserit, perseveret apud Dominum nostra dilectio, pro fratribus et sororibus nostris apud misericordiam patris non cesset oratio. *Ib.* ep. 57. . . . . ac si quis hoc fecisset, non offerretur pro eo, nec sacrificium pro dormitione ejus celebraretur. *Ib.* ep. 66.]

the most undoubtedly ancient Liturgies, especially those in the Clementine Liturgy, and those mentioned in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, and he will be so far from believing the Romish purgatory on the account of those prayers, that he will be forced to confess they make directly against it. For (to omit other arguments) they all run, as even that prayer for the dead, which is unadvisedly left by the Romanists in their own canon of the mass, as a testimony against themselves, in this form, "For all "that are in peace, or at rest in Christ." Now how can they be said to be in peace, or at rest in Christ, that are supposed to fry in the scorching flames of purgatory, and to endure pains, equal to the pains of hell, the duration of those only excepted?

Indeed the Romish purgatory is of a much later date than prayers for the dead, and is an invention utterly unknown to the catholic church, for the first three hundred years at least. We have already heard the apostolic saint, bishop, and martyr, Clement, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, acknowledging but one place for the souls of all that have finished their course in charity from the beginning of the world; and that place to be a safe and comfortable refuge and shelter to them till the resurrection, a place of glory, and therefore no purgatory. And to prevent all cavils, if any man shall question whom St. Clement means by those that have finished their course in charity; I answer, even all the elect of God, all that are not reprobates, all that shall be saved, without exception. For so he himself most expressly tells us a little before the place cited: "In charity "all the elect of God have finished their course: "without charity nothing (or no man) is accepted

" of God[q]." Far therefore was this truly apostolic pope and bishop of Rome from the dream of his most degenerate successors, that any man who dies with that repentance only, which is called *attrition*, and is void of charity or the love of God above all things, can ever be in the number of God's elect, or be saved at last by an after-game in purgatory. Again, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, which is affirmed to be his by the learned men of the church of Rome, and that not without very probable reasons[r], and however is undoubtedly of the first antiquity, he doth as it were professedly oppose the figment of purgatory. For thus he writes in the beginning of chap. 8. " Whilst therefore we are upon " earth, let us repent. For we are as clay in the " hand of the artificer. For as the potter, if he " make a vessel and finds it awry or broken in his " hands, may again fashion it anew; but if before- " hand he hath thrown it into the fiery furnace, there " is no more help for it, he cannot make it better: so " also we, as long as we are in this world, may re- " pent from the whole heart of the evils we have done " in the flesh, that we may be saved of the Lord, " whilst we have time of repentance. For after we " have left this world, we can no longer confess, or " repent[s]." What sophistry is able to reconcile this divinity with the Romish purgatory? Surely if there be no repentance at all for sin in the other world, there can be no satisfactory suffering for sin there. The holy God cannot be satisfied or atoned by the

[q] Ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἐτελειώθησαν πάντες οἱ ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ· δίχα ἀγάπης οὐδὲν εὐάρεστόν ἐστι τῷ Θεῷ.

[r] [This has not been the opinion of later critics.]

[s] Ὡς οὖν ἐσμὲν ἐπὶ γῆς μετανοήσωμεν.

sufferings of those men, who have no repentance of those sins for which they suffer. And if the papists will suppose the souls in purgatory to suffer the most grievous pains of it, without a deep repentance for the sins that brought them thither, they must make them very graceless wretches indeed, as like the damned in their wickedness, as they fancy them to be in their torments.

But to go on. Let us hear Justin Martyr again in that place which we have before in part cited out of his Dialogue with Trypho, p. 223. [p. 107.] where he brings in an old man, appearing to him in his philosophic retirement and solitude, (which some think to have been the address of a real man, others, an angelical apparition, others, only a fiction of a person usual in dialogues,) and teaching him the Christian doctrine, as of other things, so especially of man's soul, in opposition to the vain philosophy of Plato, on which he then doted. And of the soul he is thus said to have spoken: "I do not affirm that "all souls die; for this indeed would be advan- "tageous to the wicked. What then? I say that "the souls of the godly remain in a certain better "region, but unrighteous and wicked souls in an "evil one, there waiting for the time of judgment [t]." Where the grave instructor manifestly undertakes to speak of all souls; and distributes the universality of souls only into two ranks, godly and wicked souls; and he allots but two places to these two sorts, a better region to the godly souls, and an evil one to the wicked; and lastly, he confines both sorts of souls to their respective places till the day of judg-

[t] Τὸν τῆς κρίσεως ἐκδεχομένας χρόνον τότε.

ment. He must be very dextrous at reconciling contradictions, that shall undertake to bring this doctrine to any accord with that of the Romanists concerning their purgatory. The same excellent author again in his second Apology (as it is reckoned in our vulgar editions) delivers this as the received doctrine of the catholic Christians of his time, p. 66. "that the souls of the wicked subsisting even after "death, feel punishment; but the souls of good men "live happily free from punishments[u]." No good man therefore need fear a purgatory after death, if this scholar of the apostles, as he somewhere calls himself, were rightly taught.

I might lead you after the same manner through the writings of the following doctors of the first three hundred years, and by clear testimonies out of them make it evident, that although some of them had otherwise some odd conceits concerning the future state of men; yet not one of them ever acknowledged that purgatory, which the church of Rome hath imposed on the belief of Christians at this day. But the time bids me hasten to a conclusion.

I shall therefore only add one testimony more out of an author, that most probably lived after the third century, to shew, that even then the article of purgatory was a stranger to the church of God. The author of the Questions and Answers to the Orthodox, in his answer to the seventy-fifth question, having said, that in this life there is no difference as to worldly concerns between the righteous and the wicked, he immediately adds: "But after death,

[u] Κολάζεσθαι ἐν αἰσθήσει καὶ μετὰ θάνατον οὔσας τὰς τῶν ἀδίκων ψυχάς. τὰς δὲ τῶν σπουδαίων ἀπηλλαγμένας τῶν τιμωριῶν εὖ διάγειν. [Apol. I. 20. p. 55.]

" εὐθὺς, *presently* the righteous are separated from " the unrighteous; for they are carried by angels " into their meet places. And the souls of the right- " eous are conveyed into paradise, where they enjoy " the conversation and sight of angels and arch- " angels, and of our Saviour Christ also by way of " vision: according to what is said, when we are " absent from the body, we are present with the " Lord. But the souls of the unrighteous are car- " ried to the infernal regions, &c. And they" (that is, both sorts of souls) " are kept in their meet places " till the day of the resurrection and recompense." I will not dishonour any of your understandings so far, as to think any explanation necessary, to shew you, how this testimony makes directly against the fable of purgatory.

In a word, the true rise and growth of the doctrine of purgatory is plainly this. About the middle of the third century, Origen [x], among other Platonic conceits of his, vented this, that all the faithful (the apostles themselves not excepted) shall at the day of judgment pass through a purgatory fire, the fire of the great conflagration, which they shall endure for a longer or shorter time, according as their imperfections require a greater or lesser purgation. And in this conceit, directly contrary to many express texts of Scripture, he was followed for the greatness of his name by some other great men in the church of God. But how different this purgatory is from

[x] [Some of Origen's opinions concerning the state of the soul after death may be seen in the following places: de Princip. II. 6. p. 106. de Oratione, c. 11. p. 215. c. Celsum, VIII. 44. p. 774. in Levit. Hom. VII. 2. p. 222. in Reg. Hom. II. ad fin. p. 498. in Psalm. IX. 18. p. 587. in Psalm. Hom. III. 1. p. 663, 664.]

the Roman, every man of sense will presently discern. Afterwards, about the end of the fourth, or the beginning of the fifth century, St. Austin began to doubt, whether this imagined purgation were not to be made in the interval between death and the resurrection, at least as to the souls of the more imperfect Christians. And it is strange to observe, how he is off and on in this question. And yet it is not strange neither, considering how easily he may, nay how necessarily he must be at a loss, that leaves the plain and beaten path of the holy Scriptures and primitive tradition, to hunt after his own conceits and imaginations. Towards the end of the fifth century, pope Gregory, a man known to be superstitious enough, undertook dogmatically to assert the problem, and with might and main set himself to prove it, chiefly from the idle stories of apparitions of souls coming out of purgatory. Four hundred years after, pope John the Eighteenth, or, as some say, the Nineteenth, instituted a holyday, wherein he severely required all men to pray for the souls in purgatory: as if the catholic church before him had been deficient in their charity, and forgotten the miserable souls in that place of torment. At length the cabal at Florence, in the year 1439, turned the dream into an article of faith, so that now they are damned to hell, that will not believe a purgatory: and the pope's vassals still tenaciously hold and fiercely maintain the doctrine, not so much for the godliness as for the gain of it.

I have now said all that I can think necessary concerning the state of separate souls, good and bad, keeping myself from all needless curiosities, within

the bounds of the holy Scriptures, and the received doctrine of the primitive catholic church.

The sum of all is this. All good men without exception are in the whole interval between their death and resurrection, as to their souls, in a very happy condition; but after the resurrection they shall be yet more happy, receiving then their full reward, their perfect consummation of bliss, both in soul and body, the most perfect bliss they are capable of, according to the divers degrees of virtue through the grace of God on their endeavours attained by them in this life. On the other side, all the wicked as soon as they die are very miserable as to their souls; and shall be yet far more miserable, both in soul and body, after the day of judgment, proportionably to the measure of sins committed by them here on earth. This is the plain doctrine of the holy Scriptures, and of the church of Christ in its first and best ages, and this we may trust to. Other inquiries there are of more uncertainty than use, and we ought not to trouble or perplex ourselves about them.

But least of all are we fiercely to dispute about the places of separate souls where determinately they are stated. We should rather imitate here the modesty of the apostolic doctors, who (as you have heard) were content to say of the souls of men, both good and bad, after death, that they are gone *to their own proper places, to their due places, to their meet places, to places appointed by God* for them.

I shall now conclude with a brief and serious application.

First, This discourse is matter of abundant consolation to all good men, when death approacheth them.

They are sure, not only of a blessed resurrection at the last day, but of a reception into a very happy place and state in the mean time. They shall be immediately after death put in the possession of paradise, and there rejoice in the certain expectation of a crown of glory, to be bestowed on them at the day of recompense. Fear not, good man, when death comes; for the good angels are ready to receive thy soul, and convey it into Abraham's bosom. A place, wherever it is, of rest, and that not a stupid insensible rest, but a rest attended with a lively perception of a far greater joy and delight, than this whole world can afford. A place of the best society and company, where thou shalt be gathered to the spirits of just men, to the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors, and familiarly converse with those saints and excellent persons, whom thou hast heard of and admired, and whose examples thou hast endeavoured to imitate. A place that is the rendezvous of the holy angels of God, and which the Son of God himself visits and illustrates with the rays of his glory. A place where there shall be no wicked man to corrupt or offend thee, no devil to tempt thee, no sinful flesh to betray thee. A place of full security, where thou shalt be out of all possible danger of being undone and miserable for ever. A place from whence all sorrow (because all sin) is banished; where there is nothing but joy, and yet more joy still expected. This is the place that death calls thee to. Why therefore shouldest thou be afraid of dying? yea rather, why shouldest thou not, when God calls thee to it, willingly and cheerfully die, desiring *to depart, and to be with Jesus Christ, which is far*

better? If thou wert to fall into a lethargic state when thou diest, and have no perception of comfort till the last day; if darkness were then to overshadow thee till the light of Christ's glorious appearance at the resurrection came upon thee; this might reasonably make thee unwilling to die, and desirous to continue longer here, where there is some comfort, some enjoyment of Christ, though imperfect. If such a purgatory, as the supposition of the Roman church hath painted out to the vulgar, were to receive thee, well mightest thou be not only unwilling, but also horribly afraid to die. But God be thanked, Christ and his apostles, and the disciples of the apostles, have taught us much better things. *Wherefore let us comfort one another with these words*, 1 Thess. iv. 18.

Secondly, This discourse deserves seriously to be considered by all wicked men. If they die such, and who knows how soon he may die? they are immediately consigned to a place and state of irreversible misery. They have trod in the steps of Judas in this life, and shall presently after death march to the same dismal place where Judas is. A place where there is no company but the Devil and his angels, and those lost souls that have been seduced by them. A place of horrid darkness, where there shines not the least glimmering of light or comfort. A place of wretched spirits, that are continually vexed at the sad remembrance of their former sins and follies, and feel the wrath of God for them, and tremble at the apprehension of a greater wrath yet to come; who presently taste the cup of divine vengeance, and are heart-sick to think of the time when they must drink up the

full dregs of it. This, O sinner, is the miserable place and state whereinto thou shalt immediately enter when thou diest, if thou diest as now thou art.

But thou wilt say, I am not such a wretch as Judas, who betrayed our Saviour Christ to death, and sold his Lord and Master for money. I answer, But flatter not thyself; it is true, thou hast not sinned in the same instance, nor perhaps to the same degree; but sure I am thou hast sinned in the same kind. For how often (if thou beest a voluptuous man) hast thou bartered and parted with thy interest in thy Saviour Jesus, for the satisfaction of a vile lust, and the enjoyment of a transient sinful pleasure! How often, if thou beest a covetous man, hast thou wilfully transgressed the laws of the holy Jesus, by lying, cheating, and unjust actions, to gain a few pieces of glittering earth, perhaps of lesser value than Judas was bribed with! How often, if thou beest a vainglorious ambitious man, hast thou made thy conscience give way to thy vainly conceited honours! How often hast thou sold thy Redeemer for the mere breath of the people! Thou hast therefore played the Judas, and if thou diest without repentance, to Judas's place thou must go.

Do not deceive thyself with the thoughts of a reprieve till the day of judgment, or think thou shalt be in an insensible state till then, and not tormented before that time; for immediately after death, thy state of misery shall commence. Do not entertain thyself with the desperate hopes of a purgatory, or the advantage of a broken plank to save thee after the shipwreck of death. In the same miserable state thou diest, thou shalt continue in to the day of judgment, and then thy misery shall be consummated.

Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Psalm l. 22. To shut up all, let us pray and labour that we may never, never be gathered, or come into the place of Judas, the place and state of reprobate and for ever lost spirits; from this, good Lord, deliver us, that when we die, we may go to the region of the godly, to paradise, to Abraham's bosom, and at the resurrection may sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. And in order hereunto, let us here thoroughly purge *ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,* 2 Cor. vii. 1. for there is no purgation to be expected in the other life. Yea, let us endeavour to excel in virtue here, that so we may have a more abundant entrance both into the joys of paradise, and also into the fuller glories of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant, through the same Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, &c.

[These two Sermons were republished in 1765 by Leonard Chappellow, B. D. "together with some extracts relating to the "same subject, taken from writers of distinguished note and cha- "racter, with a preface." They were also noticed by the writer of "An Historical Review of the Controversy concerning an in- "termediate State, and the separate Existence of the Soul, between "Death and the general Resurrection," published in 1765, where some defects in Bishop Bull's reasoning are pointed out.]

SERMON IV.[a]

THE LOW AND MEAN CONDITION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN CONSIDERED; AS ALSO THE SINGULAR GRACE AND FAVOUR OF GOD VOUCHSAFED TO HER; AND THAT RESPECT WHICH IS DUE TO HER FROM US UPON THAT ACCOUNT, WHEREIN THE INVOCATION OF HER BY THE PAPISTS IS CONFUTED.

LUKE i. 48, 49.

For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done for me great things; and holy is his name.

UPON the very hearing of my text read, every man will presently perceive it to be a part of the magnificat, or the divine song of the blessed Virgin, into which she brake forth upon the prophetic salutation of the inspired Elizabeth to her, recited from ver. 41 to 45 inclusively. For this song is daily sung or rehearsed in our churches; and may it ever continue so to be, both for the excellency of it, and because thereby the prophecy of the blessed Virgin in my text is in part fulfilled, that future generations should call her blessed.

The song, as Grotius thinks, hath respect to the time of the children of Israel's departure out of Egypt, by which the time of the Messias was figured and typified, not without a wonderful congruity of circumstances disposed by divine Providence.

[a] [This Sermon was preached some time after the year 1671.]

There was then a Miriam, that is a Mary, a virgin and prophetess, the sister of Aaron, leading a female troop in the divine praises, Exod. xv. 20, 21. And here there is another Miriam or Mary overshadowed with the Holy Ghost, to be celebrated above all women, and therefore celebrating the praises of God. There was then, in the second place, an Elizabeth[b], the wife of Aaron; and here there is another Elizabeth, married to a priest of the line of Aaron.

Throughout this excellent song the sacred Virgin expresseth a deep sense of her own unworthiness, and upon that account a profound resentment of the singular favour of the Almighty bestowed on her. Her magnificat is not a magnifying of herself, but of the Lord. For thus it begins, "My soul doth magnify "the Lord;" not myself, who am but a poor unworthy handmaid of the Lord; but the Lord himself, who hath so highly dignified and advanced me, though unworthy. She first sings in the lowest and deepest note of humility, and then raiseth her song to the highest strain of gratitude and thanksgiving, admiring the transcendent honour to which, by the goodness of God, she was exalted. For in the former part of my text, she sincerely acknowledgeth the very mean condition she was in, when the divine grace surprised her, *for he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden*. and then she sets forth the superlative dignity that God had advanced her to, *for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.*

Let us a little stay upon that lower ground, from

[b Elisheba, Exod. vi. 23. which is the same as Elizabeth.]

whence the holy Virgin takes her rise, and consider her humble acknowledgment of her own meanness and unworthiness, expressed in these words, Ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ, which our translators have well rendered, *he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.* For the word ταπείνωσις signifies here the same with ταπεινότης, a mean, base, or vile condition; as *our body of a base condition*, or *our vile body* [c], Phil. iii. 21. And it is often by the Seventy joined with a verb signifying *to behold, respect*, or *regard*, as here, and used to express a poor mean condition, or, which is more, an afflicted condition, whereby one is brought very low, as we use to phrase it. So 2 Kings xiv. 26. *The Lord saw the affliction of Israel* [d]. And Psalm xxv. 18. *Look upon mine affliction* [e]. But it is especially to be noted, that the words of Hannah upon much a like occasion, 1 Sam. i. 11. are in the LXX. almost the same with the words of my text. *If indeed thou wilt look upon the affliction of thine handmaiden* [f]. Erasmus had long ago observed this, and corrected the vulgar Latin, too closely followed here by our older English translation, which hath it, *he hath regarded* humilitatem ancillæ, *the humility or lowliness of his handmaiden*, as that signifies the virtue of the mind, which we commonly call humility, but is more properly called modesty, and by the Greeks termed ταπεινοφροσύνη. This erroneous translation the pretenders to merit at Rome had greedily catched at, and thence inferred, that the blessed

[c] Τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν.

[d] Εἶδε Κύριος τὴν ταπείνωσιν Ἰσραήλ.

[e] Εἶδε τὴν ταπείνωσίν μου.

[f] Ἐὰν ἐπιβλέπων ἐπιβλέψῃς ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης σοῦ.

Virgin was for the merit of her humility so highly advanced by God. But Erasmus clearly evinced that ταπείνωσις is rather in this place to be rendered *parvitas, vilitas*, "the littleness," or "vileness," that is, *the low and mean estate* of thine handmaiden. The ignorant and angry monks indeed fell very foul upon that excellent man for this his criticism; whence there arose a proverb in that time, concerning any man that should attempt to amend that which could not be better expressed, *vult corrigere magnificat*, "the man would correct the magnificat." But the more learned papists are since grown wiser, and have subscribed to the interpretation of Erasmus; among whom is the judicious Maldonat, who gives us this clear account of it: "If we weigh," saith he, "the sense of these words, it is so much the less "credible, that Mary should here have spoken of her "own virtue, by how much more she excelled in "that virtue. For I cannot think it to be humility, "for a man not only to know, but also to proclaim "himself to be humble. Humility is the only virtue "that knows not itself: and I cannot tell how it "comes to pass, that the humble person, as soon as "he knows, or makes known, his own humility, "loseth it. And besides, it was not the design of "the most humble and holy Virgin to declare, that "by her merits she obtained so great a benefit; but "rather to profess herself utterly unworthy of such "a favour. She intended not therefore to say that "her virtue, but rather her low and mean estate, "and, in a word, her unworthiness, was regarded by "God: that although she was altogether unworthy "of it, yet God was pleased to vouchsafe her so great "an honour. Thus to speak became her, both as a

" virgin, and an humble and modest one[g]." So far that learned Jesuit. In short, there is no doubt but that the blessed Virgin was as humble and lowly in her spirit, as she was low and mean in her fortune and condition, and that God in bestowing so singular a grace and favour on her had respect to that virtue of her mind, more than to the lowness of her estate. But yet we say, that it was the meanness of her condition that she herself intended here to express, not her own transcendent humility, which if she had intended to express, she had lost: but by overlooking that virtue of her mind, and fixing her thoughts on her mean and unworthy condition, she indeed exercised that humility, of which she was a true owner. And therefore the same Maldonat commends those interpreters who resolve, " that Mary in this " place did not profess, but practise humility[h]."

But what was the low estate of this blessed handmaiden of the Lord? I answer, it was a state of poverty. So poor she was, so mean her portion, that she could arrive to no higher a fortune, than to be the espoused wife of a poor carpenter. So poor, that in her childbirth she was not able to procure a room (even in her greatest necessity) in that inn, to which she came as a guest; but, being neglected by her richer kindred of the royal tribe and family of David, lay indeed in the straw, and was brought to bed in a stable, and that in a cave underground, in the vicinity of the poor town of Bethlehem, according to the tradition of the most ancient doctors of the church[i]. In the very place it was, (as some

[g] Maldonat in loc.

[h] Mariam hoc loco humilitatem exercuisse, non significasse.

[i] Ἐν σπηλαίῳ τινὶ σύνεγγυς τῆς κώμης. Justin Martyr. Dial. cum

the bounds of the holy Scriptures, and the received doctrine of the primitive catholic church.

The sum of all is this. All good men without exception are in the whole interval between their death and resurrection, as to their souls, in a very happy condition; but after the resurrection they shall be yet more happy, receiving then their full reward, their perfect consummation of bliss, both in soul and body, the most perfect bliss they are capable of, according to the divers degrees of virtue through the grace of God on their endeavours attained by them in this life. On the other side, all the wicked as soon as they die are very miserable as to their souls; and shall be yet far more miserable, both in soul and body, after the day of judgment, proportionably to the measure of sins committed by them here on earth. This is the plain doctrine of the holy Scriptures, and of the church of Christ in its first and best ages, and this we may trust to. Other inquiries there are of more uncertainty than use, and we ought not to trouble or perplex ourselves about them.

But least of all are we fiercely to dispute about the places of separate souls where determinately they are stated. We should rather imitate here the modesty of the apostolic doctors, who (as you have heard) were content to say of the souls of men, both good and bad, after death, that they are gone *to their own proper places, to their due places, to their meet places, to places appointed by God* for them.

I shall now conclude with a brief and serious application.

First, This discourse is matter of abundant consolation to all good men, when death approacheth them.

They are sure, not only of a blessed resurrection at the last day, but of a reception into a very happy place and state in the mean time. They shall be immediately after death put in the possession of paradise, and there rejoice in the certain expectation of a crown of glory, to be bestowed on them at the day of recompense. Fear not, good man, when death comes; for the good angels are ready to receive thy soul, and convey it into Abraham's bosom. A place, wherever it is, of rest, and that not a stupid insensible rest, but a rest attended with a lively perception of a far greater joy and delight, than this whole world can afford. A place of the best society and company, where thou shalt be gathered to the spirits of just men, to the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors, and familiarly converse with those saints and excellent persons, whom thou hast heard of and admired, and whose examples thou hast endeavoured to imitate. A place that is the rendezvous of the holy angels of God, and which the Son of God himself visits and illustrates with the rays of his glory. A place where there shall be no wicked man to corrupt or offend thee, no devil to tempt thee, no sinful flesh to betray thee. A place of full security, where thou shalt be out of all possible danger of being undone and miserable for ever. A place from whence all sorrow (because all sin) is banished; where there is nothing but joy, and yet more joy still expected. This is the place that death calls thee to. Why therefore shouldest thou be afraid of dying? yea rather, why shouldest thou not, when God calls thee to it, willingly and cheerfully die, desiring *to depart, and to be with Jesus Christ, which is far*

estate; by not trusting in or setting his heart upon those worldly riches that he is possessor of, but earnestly coveting the heavenly treasures; by temperance at his full table, by intermixing sometimes religious fastings with his feasts, and by exercises of mortification; by delighting more in the service of God and virtuous actions, than in sensual pleasures; lastly, by paring off his superfluities, and expending them in works of piety and charity. Upon these terms only, he that is rich in this world may reasonably hope to be blessed and happy also in the other.

It is an excellent advice that St. James in his Epistle gives in a few words both to poor and rich, chap. i. 9, 10. *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.* Where the sense of the former part of the advice is clearly this: Let not the man that is poor among you Christians, and contemptible in the world, be cast down or dejected at his poverty, but rather let him rejoice, considering the sublime and happy estate to which by Christianity he is exalted, and let him therein glory. His advancement is, that he is a Christian, for by this one name an immense dignity is signified, viz. that he is a son of God, and a coheir with Christ in the heavenly kingdom. But what means the apostle by the opposite clause, *but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away?* I answer, that the best interpreters [k] think that the speech of the apostle is here elliptical, and

[k Grotius, Price, &c.]

to be supplied by a verb of a contrary signification. As in that of St. Paul, 1 Tim. iv. 3. *Forbidding to marry, and to abstain from meats,* we must understand (according to the supplement of our English translation) *and commanding to abstain from meats.* So here the speech is to be thus supplied: *But let the rich man hang down the head and be humble, in that he is made low,* in that a little time shall level him with the poorest man; *because as the flower of the grass,* so he and his riches *pass away.* The scope of the apostle is certainly this, to set before the rich their own vileness, that is, the instability of their condition, and by the consideration thereof to cure the pride and insolence to which they are commonly incident. And the exhortation is the same with that of St. Paul, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate,* &c.

But let us at length proceed to the second part of the text. The blessed Virgin having ingenuously acknowledged the low estate and condition, wherein the grace of God found her, immediately proceeds in the next words to declare the transcendent dignity of that estate, to which by the same grace she was now advanced: *For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.*

From henceforth, that is, from this very time of my conception of the holy Jesus, and upon the account of it. *All generations,* that is, all those generations, that from henceforth to the end of the

world shall believe on that Jesus who shall be born of me. *Shall call me blessed,* that is, shall acknowledge and proclaim me to be the most blessed and happy of women, congratulating the singular grace and favour of God vouchsafed to me. In the prosecution of this part of my text, I shall fix these bounds to my discourse. I. To shew you more particularly what was the singular grace and favour of God vouchsafed to the blessed Virgin. II. To explain more distinctly, what is that respect that is due to her from us upon that account.

I. What was the singular grace and favour bestowed on the blessed Virgin. A most transcendent favour it was. For,

1. She was of all the women, of all the virgins in Israel, elected and chosen by God, to be the instrument of bringing into the world the long-desired Messias. All the virtuous daughters of Jacob, a good while before the revelation of our Saviour, but especially in the age when he appeared, (the time wherein they saw the more punctual and remarkable prophecies concerning the coming of the Messias fulfilled,) desired, and were not without hopes each of them, that they might have had this honour done unto them. But it was granted to none of all those holy women and virgins, but to the Virgin Mary. And therefore *all generations shall call her blessed.*

2. The blessed Virgin Mary was the only woman that took off the stain and dishonour of her sex, by being the instrument of bringing that into the world, which should repair and make amends for the loss and damage brought to mankind by the transgression of the first woman Eve. By a woman, as the

principal cause, we were first undone; and by a woman, as an instrument under God, a Saviour and Redeemer is born to us. And the blessed Virgin Mary is that woman. Hence Irenæus, in his 5th book, chap. 19, makes a comparison between the virgin Eve (for such the ancients believed her to be, till after her transgression) and the Virgin Mary. *Seductionem illam solutam*, &c. i. e. "That seduction being dissolved, whereby the virgin Eve designed for man was unhappily seduced: the Virgin Mary espoused to man, by the truth happily received the glad tidings from an angel. For as the former was seduced by the speech of an angel to flee from God, having transgressed his commandment; so the latter, by the word also of an angel, received the good news, *ut portaret Deum*, that she should bear God within her, being obedient to his word. And as the former was seduced to flee from God, so the latter was persuaded to obey God. So that the Virgin Mary became the comforter of the virgin Eve [1]." Where the last words of the holy martyr are grossly misinterpreted by the Latin translator, and have given occasion to the papists to conclude from them, that Eve was saved by the intercession of the Virgin Mary. A most absurd conceit, unworthy of the learned and holy Father, or indeed of any man else of common sense; for who knows not that Eve was past all need of intercession, before ever the blessed Mary could be capable of making intercession for her? Doubtless the Greek word used by Irenæus here was παράκλητος, which as it signifies *an advo-*

[1] Uti virginis Evæ Virgo Maria fieret advocata.

cate, so it also as frequently signifies *a comforter*, and so ought to have been rendered here. But, you will say, how did Eve receive comfort from the blessed Virgin Mary? I answer, in that gracious promise delivered by God himself in the sentence passed on the serpent, after Eve's seduction by him, Gen. iii. 15. where it is said, *that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.* Every man now knows, that the seed there spoken of is Christ; and consequently, that the individual woman, whose immediate seed he was to be, is the blessed Virgin Mary. The holy Virgin was the happy instrument of the saving incarnation of the Son of God, who hath effectually crushed the old serpent the Devil, and destroyed his power over all those that believe on himself; and thereby she became the instrument of comfort to Eve, and all other sinners. This is certainly all the good Father intended by that expression.

3. The blessed Virgin was consecrated to be a temple of the divinity in a singular manner. For the eternal Son of God, by an ineffable conjunction, united himself to that human nature, which was miraculously conceived and formed in her, even whilst it was within her; and so he that was born of her, at the very time that he was born of her, was θεάνθρωπος, *God and man.* O astonishing condescension of the Son of God! O wonderful advancement of the blessed Virgin! And therefore we daily sing in our Te Deum, "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ; "thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. When "thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst "not abhor the Virgin's womb." Upon which account the Fathers of the third general council at Ephesus, convened against Nestorius, approved the

title of θεοτόκος, *the mother of God*, given to the blessed Virgin.

They approved it, I say; they did not first invent it, as some have ignorantly affirmed. And therefore they themselves in their synodical epistle say, that the holy Fathers before them doubted not to call the blessed Virgin θεοτόκον, *deiparam*, "the mother "of God." Indeed an whole age before that council, we find Eusebius expressly giving that title to the sacred Virgin in his third book of the Life of Constantine, chap. 43. And Socrates, a most credible witness in this matter, in the seventh book of his Eccl. Hist. chap. 32. assures us that Origen, long before Eusebius, largely explained and asserted that title, as applied to the blessed Virgin. And to go yet higher, we have heard Irenæus, who was a scholar to a scholar [m] of the apostles, magnifying the Virgin upon this account, that she did *portare Deum*, bear God within her. If she did *portare Deum*, she did *parere Deum*; if she bore God, she brought him forth too, and so was θεοτόκος, *the mother of God*, that is, of him that was God. Nay the blessed martyr and disciple of the apostles, Ignatius, in his Epistle to the Ephesians [n], edit. Voss. p. 27. feared not to say, "Our God Jesus Christ "was conceived of Mary [o]." But what need we search after human authorities, when the inspired Elizabeth, in her divine rapture a little before my text, ver. 43, plainly gives the blessed Virgin the

[m] [Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna.]

[n] [C. 18. p. 15. ed. Coteler.]

[o] Ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστὸς ἐκυοφορήθη ὑπὸ Μαρίας. [It was used by Hippolytus, Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, Theonas, Alexander bishop of Alexandria, Eusebius, &c.]

same title? *And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me?* Where μήτηρ τοῦ Κυρίου, *the mother of our Lord,* is doubtless of the same import with θεοτόκος, *the mother of God:* for the title of *our Lord* belongs to Christ chiefly as he is *our God.* And we are to conceive Elizabeth, being filled with the Spirit, to have given this title of *her Lord* to the babe in the blessed Virgin's womb, not according to the poor narrow vulgar sense of the degenerate Jews, but according to the most august and highest sense of the word, viz. that he is so *our Lord,* as to be *our God* also. Now the necessary consequence of this dignity of the blessed Virgin is, that she remained for ever a virgin, as the catholic church hath always held and maintained [p]. For it cannot with decency be imagined, that the most holy vessel, which was thus once consecrated to be a receptacle of the Deity, should afterwards be desecrated and profaned by human use. And so much of the singular grace and favour vouchsafed to the blessed Virgin.

II. We are next to explain, What is that respect which is due to her from us upon that account. She herself in the text saith, *all generations shall call me blessed.* Where the Romanists fancy, they have found a plain warrant for all that extravagant honour which they give the blessed Virgin; and that this is an express prediction of hers, that that should be done unto her, which they now do in the church of Rome. Hence one of their celebrated commentators, that so understands the text, could

[p] [Jer. Taylor also maintained her perpetual virginity. Life of Christ, §. 3. and Pearson in his Exposition of the Creed.]

not forbear thereupon to break out into this amazing acclamation to the Virgin Mary: *Vivat tuum decus, tua laus, tua gloria, quamdiu vivent angeli, quamdiu vivent homines, quamdiu vivet Christus, quamdiu Deus erit Deus, in omnia sæculorum sæcula* [q]. Which words, not without a kind of tremor, I thus English: "Let thy honour, thy praise, thy glory "live, as long as angels live, as long as men shall "live, as long as Christ shall live, as long as God "shall be God, even for ever and ever." But how vain are these men! The expression of the blessed Virgin doubtless signifies but the same thing, though in a wider extent, with that of Leah upon the birth of her son Asher, Gen. xxx. 13. where the LXX. hath it, *Happy am I, for the daughters shall call me blessed* [r]. No man can be so foolish as to imagine she meant, that the daughters should pray to her and worship her; but only that they should think and acknowledge her to be a happy woman. So here, when the holy Virgin saith, *all generations shall call me blessed;* she means no more, than that all generations should, upon the account of her bringing into the world the common Saviour, esteem and proclaim her the most blessed woman. And this we most willingly and gladly do.

We think and speak most respectfully of her, and do not ordinarily mention her name without a preface or epithet of honour, as *the holy, the blessed* Virgin, and the like. We do, by the appointment of our church, sing or rehearse in our daily service her excellent magnificat; and thereby we testify

[q] Cornelius a Lapide, in loc.

[r] Μακαρία ἐγὼ ὅτι μακαριοῦσί με αἱ γυναῖκες.

our assent to, and complacence in, those singular favours that God is therein said to have bestowed on her; and together with her, we finally return the praise and glory of all to God alone. We celebrate two annual festivals in her memorial, the feasts of her annunciation and purification. And if we could think of any other honour that we could do her, without dishonouring God the Father and his eternal Son, we would most willingly yield it to her. Wherefore the papists are themselves egregious calumniators, when they charge us protestants, that we are *beatæ Virginis conviciatores*[s], "reproachers of the blessed Virgin." We defy their charge; we honour the blessed Virgin as a most singular elect vessel of God; as one in the highest degree of all mere mortals honoured by God: but therefore we will not yield her any of that honour that is peculiar to God; for God himself hath told us, that he *will not give his glory to another*, Isai. xlii. 8. She saith indeed, that *all generations should call her blessed;* but not that any generation should call upon her to bless them. This had been a most arrogant sacrilegious speech, altogether unbeseeming the most humble, as well as holy Virgin.

We have carefully read the holy Scriptures of the New Testament, and cannot find any one iota in them, that makes in the least for the invocation and adoration of the Virgin Mary. Nay we find the stream of holy writ carrying and directing all our prayers and supplications to God alone, through Jesus Christ the only Mediator. And for the blessed Virgin, we cannot be so stupid as not to remark and

[s] Maldonat in loc.

observe the great silence concerning her in sacred history, after the relation of her bringing forth our Saviour, and her presentation of him in the temple, and their exile into Egypt, and return to Nazareth. After this we hear of her but seldom, and that only occasionally. Once she is mentioned as present, and receiving a check from our Saviour, at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee, John ii. 1. &c. Another time she is mentioned together with the brethren of our Saviour as inquiring after him, Matt. xii. 47. &c. She is mentioned again, John xix. 25, 26, 27. as standing by the cross of her Son, beholding his passion, and thereby fulfilling the prophecy of good old Simeon, that *a sword should pierce through her own soul*, Luke ii. 35. And lastly, she is mentioned by St. Luke as present at that assembly of Christians, wherein Matthias was elected to the apostleship in the room of Judas [t], Acts i. 14. In all which places the mention of her is such, as may seem purposely designed to have prevented that superstitious and idolatrous worship of her, which was afterward set up in the church of Rome.

In the rest of the writings of the New Testament, the Epistles of the apostles, wherein they fully instruct us in all the essentials of that religion and worship which Christianity requires of us, she is not so much as once named; much less is there any the least intimation of any invocation or religious worship due to her from us.

It is a most ridiculous account which the Ro-

[t] [It is not actually said that she was present at the election of Matthias: compare v. 15. The Romanists say that she was present with the apostles on the day of Pentecost.]

manists give us of this silence of the holy Scriptures. Lorinus, a very learned and approved writer among them, in his exposition of Acts i. 14. thus resolves the difficulty. "There are few things delivered concerning the mother of Christ in the Scriptures, "because those things were sufficient which in her "respected Christ; and also because that one title "of *the mother of Christ and of God* serves instead "of all praises; and farther, because her testimony "might be suspected by the unbelieving world: "and lastly, because as Adam was formed out of "the unformed and thick earth, and then Eve out "of his rib; so Christ was first to be preached, and "the virtue of Christ to be made known in the rude "earth of persecutions and martyrs[u]. Afterwards "the blessed Virgin was celebrated by many encomiums of the Fathers, and made illustrious by "many miracles, temples, festivals," &c. Thus far he. But, 1. the Jesuit yields all that we desire, when he confesseth "that those things were sufficient to have been spoken concerning the blessed "Virgin, which in her respected Christ." Nothing more certain. It was the setting forth Christ, not of his mother, which was the end and design of the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures of the New Testament; and therefore that was sufficient to be spoken of her which served to lead us to the knowledge of, and to faith in, Christ. 2. As for the title of *the mother of God*, it doth not at all infer any right the blessed Virgin hath to our religious adoration of her. By that relation to the Son of God she cannot challenge any share with him in his divine honour;

[u] In rudi terra persecutionum et martyrum.

much less any commanding power over him, which yet hath been formerly in the public offices of the church of Rome[x], and I am certain is still in some of their private offices, attributed to her[y]. For though she was the mother of him that was God, yet she contributed nothing to him as God; but he, as such, was and is her God, Lord, Creator, and Saviour; to whom therefore she, together with us, pays all humble adoration and worship. Nay, she was not his mother as man, in so strict a sense as other women are mothers of their children; for she conceived him not naturally, but by the help of the divine Spirit overshadowing her: so that her very conception of him as man was immediately due to him as God, and she was eternally bound to praise him for so wonderful an operation wrought in her. And it is to be observed, that the ancient doctors of the church, when they contested with heretics about the title θεοτόκος, *mother of God*, designed not by that title so much to advance the honour of the blessed Virgin, as to secure the real and inseparable union of the two natures in Christ; and to shew that the human nature, which Christ took of the holy Virgin, never subsisted separately from the divine person of the Son of God. 3. His third reason of this silence is plainly foolish and absurd, "that her testimony "would have been suspected by the unbelieving "world:" for by the same reason the Scriptures must have been silent concerning Christ himself also. Be-

[x] [Accedit ad illud aureum Divinæ Majestatis tribunal, non rogans, sed imperans, domina non ancilla. *Damianus.* Maria orat ut filia, jubet ut soror, imperat ut mater. *Albertus Magnus, Bibl. Mariæ.*]

[y] [Monstra te esse matrem. *Office of the Virgin.*]

sides, the question is not of the Virgin Mary's testimony of herself, but of the testimony of the apostles and sacred writers concerning her. Now certainly it highly concerned the world to understand how much the blessed Virgin could do with God and his Son, if "by her all grace be dispensed," as the Papists have affirmed. And the apostles cannot escape the censure of gross negligence or great envy, if they knew of any such conveyance of grace, and yet would not vouchsafe to the world the least point of their finger towards it. 4. His fourth and last reason is an impious speculation. For are Christ and the blessed Virgin joined together in the point of religious worship, as the male and female deity, as Adam and Eve were in their formation, with this only difference, that as Adam was first formed, and after Eve, so the divine power of Christ was first proclaimed in the world, and afterward the blessed Virgin was celebrated and made illustrious? Besides, what a dirty comparison is that, whereby he resembles the primitive age, the age of confessors and martyrs, the best and most glorious age of the church, to the thick and unformed earth and clay, out of which Adam was fashioned; and the after-ages to the more refined substance of Adam, out of which Eve was taken! What a dreadful infatuation must it be, that shall make men, of great sense and learning otherwise, thus to write and speak! Lastly, How plainly doth the Jesuit here again yield up the cause to us! He confesseth, that the knowledge of Christ alone was at first preached in the days of persecution and martyrdom, and that the celebration of the blessed Virgin (such as is now practised in the church of Rome) sprang up afterwards. A most certain

truth; for there is not one tittle to be found in any genuine writer of the first three hundred years after Christ, (to go no farther,) that may give any the least countenance to the invocation of the blessed Virgin Mary, or of any other saint; but very many most express testimonies against it in all of them: and therefore we are most certain, that the doctrine of the church of Rome concerning the invocation of the blessed Virgin, and the other saints, was none of the doctrines delivered by the holy apostles to the church of Christ. And for our part, we are content and fully satisfied with that knowledge of Christ alone, which was preached "in the rude earth of persecu-"tions and martyrs[z];" that is, in the best and most glorious ages of the church: and we willingly leave those after-refined discoveries of the blessed Virgin's honour to the papists, to follow and embrace them, seeing they will not be otherwise persuaded, at their own peril.

Before I conclude, I will mention some few instances of extravagant honour which the papists give, but we of the church of England utterly refuse to yield, to the blessed Virgin, out of a true zeal to the honour of God.

We will not give her lavish and excessive attributes, beyond what the holy Scriptures allow her, and the holy men of the primitive church afforded her. We will call her *blessed*, as the mother of our Lord, in the sense above explained. But we dare not call her "queen of heaven," "queen of angels, patri-"archs, prophets, and apostles," "source of the foun-

[z] In rudi terra persecutionum et martyrum.

"tain of grace," "refuge of sinners," "comfort of "the afflicted," "advocate of all Christians," as she is called in that Litany of our Lady still used in their devotions. For we have no instance of such attributes given to the blessed Virgin in the holy Scriptures, and they are too big for any mere creature.

We will not ascribe those excellencies to her, that she never had nor could have; as, a fulness of habitual grace, more grace than all the angels and archangels of God put together ever had; that she was born without original sin, and never committed any the least actual sin, and consequently never needed a Saviour. These are wild things, which very many of the papists, drunk with superstition, say of her.

We will not give her the honour of invocation, or praying to her, as all the papists do, for the unanswerable reasons above mentioned. Indeed, as long as that one text of Scripture remains in our Bibles, which we read 1 Tim. ii. 5. *There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;* we shall never be persuaded, by any sophistry or subtle distinctions of our adversaries, to betake ourselves to the mediation of the blessed Virgin, much less of any other saint.

Much more do we abhor the impiety of those among the papists, who have held it disputable, whether the milk of the blessed Virgin or the blood of her Son be to be preferred; and at last could pitch upon no better resolution than this, that the milk and blood should be mixed together, and both compound a medicine for their souls.

We abhor to divide the divine kingdom and empire, giving one half, the better half, the kingdom of

mercy, to the blessed Virgin, and leaving only the kingdom of justice to her Son. This is downright treason against the only universal King and Monarch of the world.

We are astonished at the doxology, which some great and learned men of the church of Rome have not been ashamed to close their printed books with; *Laus Deo, Deiparæque Virgini;* "Praise be to "God, and the Virgin-mother of God."

We should tremble every joint of us, to offer any such recommendation as this to the Virgin Mary. Hear if you can without horror a prayer of theirs to her. It is this:

"O my lady, holy Mary, I recommend myself into "thy blessed trust and singular custody, and into the "bosom of thy mercy, this night and evermore, and in "the hour of my death, as also my soul and my body; "and I yield unto thee all my hope and consolation, "all my distress and misery, my life and the end "thereof, that by thy most holy intercession, and by "thy merits, all my works may be directed and dis-"posed, according to thine and thy Son's will. Amen." What fuller expressions can we use to declare our absolute affiance, trust, and dependence on the eternal Son of God himself, than they here use in this recommendation to the Virgin? Yea, who observes not, that the will of the blessed Virgin is expressly joined with the will of her Son, as the rule of our actions, and that so, as that her will is set in the first place. A plain smatch of their old blasphemous impiety, in advancing the mother above the Son, and giving her a commanding power over him. Can they have the face to say, that all this is no more than desiring the blessed Virgin to pray for them, as

we desire the prayers of one another on earth? And yet, this recommendation is to be seen in a manual of prayers and litanies printed at Antwerp no longer ago than 1671, and that *permissu superiorum*, in the evening prayers for Friday. A book it is to my knowledge commonly to be found in the hands of our English papists; for I had it from a near relation of mine, (who had been perverted by the emissaries of Rome, but is since returned again to the communion of the church of England,) who assured me, that she used it herself by the direction of her confessor, in her private devotions.

Lastly, We abominate the impious imposture of those, who have translated the most humble and holy Virgin into an idol of pride and vanity, and represented her as a vainglorious and aspiring creature, like Lucifer, (I tremble at the comparison,) thirsting after divine worship and honour, and seeking out superstitious men and women, whom she may oblige to her more especial service, and make them her perpetual votaries. For what greater affront than this could they have offered to her humility and sanctity? How fulsome, yea how perfectly loathsome to us, are the tales of those, that have had the assurance to tell us of the amorous addresses of the blessed Virgin to certain persons her devout worshippers, choosing them for her husbands, bestowing her kisses liberally on them, giving them her breasts to suck, and presenting them with bracelets and rings of her hair, as love-tokens! The fables of the Jewish Talmudists, yea of Mahomet, may seem grave, serious, and sober histories, compared to these and other such like impudent fictions. Insomuch that wise men have thought that the authors of these romances in religion were no

better than the tools and instruments of Satan, used by him to expose the Christian religion, and render it ridiculous, and thereby to introduce atheism. And indeed we are sure, that the wits of Italy, where these abominable deceits have been and are chiefly countenanced, were the first broachers and patrons of infidelity and atheism in Europe, since the time that Christianity obtained in it.

In a word, such is the worship given to the blessed Virgin by many in the church of Rome, that they deserve to be called *Mariani*, rather than *Christiani*, &c.

My brethren, let us bless God that we yet breathe in a pure air, free from the noisome and pestilent fogs of those superstitious vanities, where none of those fooleries and impieties are obtruded on our faith or practice; that we live in a church, wherein no other name is invocated but the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; nor divine worship given to any but to the one true God, through Jesus Christ the only Mediator. O happy we, if we knew and valued our own happiness! But alas! alas! many of us do not. We despise and trample upon that reformation of religion, which by a miracle of God's mercy was wrought in this nation in the days of our forefathers, and run to schismatical assemblies under pretence of seeking after a better reformation. We abandon that church, and can hardly forbear to call it antichristian and popish harlot, the foundation-stones whereof were laid and cemented in the blood of God's holy martyrs, that died in defiance of the errors and superstitions of the Romish synagogue. And yet these men call themselves protestants, yea the only true protestants, and will scarce allow us of

the church of England a share in the title. God grant, that by this our horrid ingratitude, we do not provoke him to recall that mercy, which ourselves indeed throw back into his face, as if it were not worth our acceptance, and to cause a dark night of popery to return on us; wherein a superstitious and idolatrous worship shall be thrust upon us, yea and we shall be compelled to forbidden and idolatrous worship, or to death; wherein our Bibles, that we now, not only with liberty but encouragement, carry about us, shall be snatched out of our hands, and fabulous lying legends put in the room of them; wherein our excellent Liturgy, in a tongue we all understand, which many of us now loathe, and call pitiful pottage, yea and popish mass,-shall be abolished, and the abominable Roman mass indeed placed in its stead; wherein the cup of blessing in the holy eucharist shall be sacrilegiously taken from us, which is now openly and freely held forth to us all, and that in so excellent a way of administration, that the whole Christian world beside is not able at this day to shew the like; but we scorn to take it, and refuse to receive it, unless it be given us by an unhallowed hand in a factious conventicle. If ever these and the other ill effects of popery, which I cannot now mention, happen to us, (which God avert,) and I trust it will never come to pass; but, I say, if ever these things should befall us, we should then, when it is too late, clearly distinguish between light and darkness, and discern the vast difference between the established religion, which many now call popery, and popery itself. We should then cast back a kind and mournful eye upon our dear mother the church of England, whose very bowels we now tear and

rip up by our wicked schisms. We should then wish ourselves in the safe arms of her communion once again, and resolve never more to depart from it. Let us do that now, whilst it is seasonable, which we shall then wish we had done, but cannot do.

But I return to my text, and shall, for a conclusion of my discourse on it, observe, that both it and the whole magnificat, or song of the blessed Virgin, is applicable to, and may be made use of by, all true Christians. For,

I. The nature which the Son of God assumed of his virgin mother is our common nature, which is by that assumption transcendently, to our own amazement and the admiration of angels, dignified and advanced. The eternal Word, by his incarnation, or being made flesh, intended not directly to honour the blessed Virgin in particular, but mankind in general. He intended thereby to declare us his brethren, by being made of the same flesh and blood that we are, as the divine author of the Epistle to the Hebrews assures us, chap. ii. 14. *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.* And verse 17. *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.* In a word, the Son of God therefore honoured the blessed Virgin so far, as in and from her to become man, that he might advance human nature, by assuming it into the unity of his divine person; and that being born of her, he might procure, not only hers, but our common salvation. So that every one of us may sing the magnificat, and bear a part in this divine anthem, and, *mutatis mutandis*, say, "My "soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath

" rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded " the low estate of us vile and mortal men, his poor " servants and vassals. For behold from henceforth, " and upon the account of the incarnation of the Son " of God, the whole creation, yea the very angels " themselves, shall and do proclaim us blessed. For " he that is mighty hath magnified us in the highest " degree, by uniting himself to our nature, and there- " fore holy is, and for ever blessed be, his name." And therefore the holy Virgin, presently after my text, celebrates the mercy shewn to her, as common to all the sons of men in all ages, that do not by their disobedience and ingratitude render themselves utterly unworthy of it. Ver. 50. *And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation, or throughout all generations.*

Wherefore most lamentable is the ignorance and folly of our dissenters, who despise the use of this excellent song in the daily service of our church, as unedifying, as impertinent, and not belonging to them, and proper only to the blessed Virgin, and therefore refuse to stand up and bear a part in the rehearsal of it. Certainly they are very ill taught and instructed, who understand not that all Christians may and ought most heartily to join in this divine hymn. For,

II. The blessedness of the holy Virgin is not so altogether proper to her, or incommunicable to others, but that the meanest sincere Christian may share with her in the better part of it. Wonderful and full of comfort are the words of our Saviour, Luke xi. where, when a certain woman, hearing his excellent discourse, cried out, *Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked,* ver. 27.

our Saviour answers, ver. 28. *Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.* Which is not a negation of the blessedness of his mother, (for that would be a plain contradiction to my text,) but a correction of the woman's mistake, who so admired the blessedness of the mother of such a son, that she scarce thought of any other blessedness. Our Saviour therefore tells her, *that blessed are they also, yea and chiefly, that hear the word of God, and keep it.* And in another place our gracious Lord being told that his mother and brethren desired to speak with him, gave this short answer, *Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hands towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother,* Matt. xii. 48, 49, 50. Where I think there is a mighty emphasis in those words of our Saviour, *my Father which is in heaven;* as if he had said, You Jews think of me as a mere man, and understand not any other relation that I have, besides that which is according to the flesh: but know ye that I am of a higher original, even the eternal Son of the eternal God dwelling in heaven; and as such I own no relation but what is spiritual, and every obedient disciple of mine is to me as a brother, or sister, or mother. Indeed, the Virgin herself was more blessed by conceiving Christ in her heart by faith, than by conceiving him in her womb. And in this her chiefest blessedness the meanest Christian, that is a sincere one, may be a sharer with her. Christ may be thus formed, nay he must be so in every one that shall be saved, Ga-

latians iv. 19. And if we be true Christians, though all generations do not call us blessed, as the holy Virgin, yet together with her we shall be indeed blessed beyond all generations, even for ever and ever.

To God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be given and ascribed all honour and glory, all religious worship and adoration, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON V.

ST. PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH, THE MESSENGER OF SATAN, SENT TO PREVENT HIS BEING EXALTED ABOVE MEASURE, CONSIDERED AND EXPLAINED; WITH SEVERAL PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS DRAWN FROM THAT SUBJECT.

2 COR. xii. 7, 8, 9.

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

ST. PAUL, of all the apostles of Christ, met with the greatest opposition and contempt from the false Judaizing apostles, that troubled the church in his time. The true reason whereof was, that he first of all openly and every where proclaimed and preached the utter abolition of the Mosaic law, both as to Jews and Gentiles. But the pretence seems to be this, that he was none of the twelve apostles, called by Christ himself when on earth; nor afterwards duly elected an apostle in the room of any of that number, as Matthias was: but an odd thirteenth apostle, thrusting himself into that sacred office, they knew not how, or by what authority. For the relation of Christ's glorious appearance to him from heaven, and

sending him to preach his Gospel among the Gentiles, (which indeed was a higher call than any of the other apostles had,) doubtless they rejected as a mere fiction; though the visible effect of that apparition, his strange and sudden alteration and change from a violent persecutor, to be a preacher of the Gospel, yea and willingly to be persecuted for it, was of itself sufficient to convince all sober and unprejudiced persons of the certain truth of it.

Against these calumniators he strenuously vindicates his divine mission and authority in the two preceding, in this, and in the following chapters. In pursuance of which design, he is constrained to do that, which in itself, and prescinded from the circumstances he was in, had been sin and folly, that is, to commend himself. And he excellently and fully demonstrates, that he was not in any respect inferior to the very chiefest of the apostles; neither in his sufferings, nor in his miracles, nor in his generous charity and unwearied diligence in the discharge of his office, nor in the success of it; nay, that in the three things last mentioned he exceeded all the other apostles; nor in the point of revelations made known to him.

And upon this last head he insists in the beginning of this chapter, out of which my text is taken; where he speaks of admirable visions and revelations he had received from God at several times, once in the *third* or *highest heaven*, and another time in *paradise*, ver. 2, 3, 4. The ὑπερβολὴ, the *exceeding greatness* or excellency of these revelations, he declares to be such, that he was in danger by them to be transported beyond the bounds of sobriety and modesty, into pride and vanity, had not God in his wisdom and

goodness, by a very severe discipline on his flesh or body, prevented that undue elation of his mind. Which discipline, he farther shews, the gracious God thought necessary, for the same reason, still to continue on him, notwithstanding his earnest repeated and reiterated prayers and supplications for the removal of it; only assuring him, that his grace should be sufficient for him, and that his strength should be made perfect in that weakness of his; and that thereupon he fully acquiesced in the good-will and pleasure of God, yea and rejoiced and gloried in that sharp chastisement. *And lest I should be exalted above measure,* &c.

For the understanding of which text, we are to inquire into these three things. I. What is meant in those words of St. Paul, *lest I should be exalted above measure.* II. What we are to understand by the *thorn in the flesh.* III. What by *the messenger of Satan, sent to buffet the apostle.*

I. Let us inquire what is meant in those words of St. Paul, *lest I should be exalted above measure;* for that is questioned by some. Photius, in Œcumenius, understands the words, not of St. Paul's being over much exalted in his own conceit, but of his being too much extolled in the esteem and praises of others. And Theophylact also mentions the same interpretation, though he himself utterly dislikes it. Indeed the Greek will bear it well enough; for ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι may not unfitly be translated, *lest I should be too much extolled,* that is, magnified by others. And of this he expressly speaks in the verse immediately preceding, *lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be.* And it seems a very good and pious design to endeavour to excuse

the excellent apostle from so shameful an infirmity, as a propension to pride. But yet this interpretation is by no means to be admitted. For, 1. all the most ancient doctors of the church, with one consent, understand the words as we do, of St. Paul's being in danger to be too much lifted up in his own conceit. So Irenæus, in his fifth book, chap. 3. tells us, that the words of the apostle here signify "being lifted "up to fall from the truth[a];" and "to be exalted "against God, and presumptuously to assume glory "to one's self[b]." And so all the rest of the Fathers, who are herein followed by a full stream of modern interpreters. And to oppose so general a consent would savour something of that sin of pride in ourselves, which we endeavour to excuse St. Paul from a propension to. 2. It is not so reasonable to conceive that St. Paul should be so severely afflicted, and thus buffeted, to prevent the sin of others, as that he should suffer so much to prevent or cure a sin of his own. 3. The exaltation spoken of in the text is plainly expressed as an effect likely to have immediately happened from those visions and revelations, which St. Paul received in secret, and which were not known to others, till he thus declared them. The danger therefore he speaks of was to himself, and not to others. 4. As for the context, if it be more closely considered, it doth not necessarily confirm the other interpretation. For of the connection of my text with what went before, a clear account may be given without it. For the apostle having said, he would forbear to insist on his revelations,

[a] Elatum excidere a veritate.

[b] Extolli adversus Deum, et præsumptionem suæ gloriæ assumere.

lest, if he should set them forth to the full, other men might be tempted to think too highly of him; he proceeds in the text to shew, that the revelations were indeed so great and excellent, that he himself, after he had received them, was in danger of being transported into pride, if God had not administered an effectual remedy to prevent that distemper of his mind. Besides, having, verse 5, said, that he would rather *glory in his infirmities*, than in his revelations; in the text he accordingly speaks of those infirmities, and that as they were on purpose inflicted on him by God, to keep him from glorying too much in the revelations he had received. Lastly, Though St. Paul were an excellent apostle, yet he was still but a man, and a man on earth, not yet in heaven, a *viator* not a *comprehensor*, a proficient, not yet fully perfect, or so immutably confirmed in virtue, as to be out of all danger of the sin of pride, which even the angels of heaven fell into. Hence Theophylact having thus paraphrased the words of St. Paul, "lest "I should be vainglorious[c]," presently subjoins, "for "St. Paul himself also was a man[d]." The commonly received interpretation therefore here is undoubtedly the truest.

II. Our second inquiry is, what is meant by the *thorn in the flesh*. The Greek word σκόλοψ signifies *quicquid acuminatum est*, "any thing that is "sharp-pointed," as a goad, or stake, or arrow, or thorn, or the like; which being fixed in the flesh or body is very painful and troublesome. It is a metaphor; and what the thing is St. Paul intended by it, is the great question. I shall set before you the se-

[c] Ἵνα μὴ κενοδοξῶ. [d] Ἄνθρωπος γὰρ ἦν καὶ αὐτός.

veral interpretations of expositors, rejecting those which I have evident reasons to conclude false, and establishing that which I think to be the true one.

First, Some [e] by the *thorn in the flesh* understand "those troubles, afflictions, and persecutions, which "St. Paul suffered, and wherewith he was continually "molested in the preaching of the Gospel." But I do not think this to be the meaning of the apostle, for these reasons. 1. The *thorn in the flesh* he speaks of seems to be some trouble more peculiar to himself, and adapted to his particular circumstances; whereas troubles and persecutions for the sake of the Gospel were common to him with all the rest of the apostles; and yet we hear not a word of any *thorn in the flesh* given to any of them. 2. Troubles and persecutions for the Gospel are too general a thing to agree to the expressions in the text, which are more particular, and plainly denote some special trouble or evil, wherewith St. Paul was exercised. For it is said in the singular number, *a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan.* To evade which argument, some have answered, that here is meant some one particular and more notable adversary of the apostle, that continually set himself to oppose and persecute him, as Alexander the coppersmith, or the like. But it were vain to conceive, that either Alexander the coppersmith, or any other adversary of St. Paul, should continually dog him at the heels whithersoever he went, and be a perpetual vexation to him, as the thorn he speaks of was. Besides, the thorn is said to have its seat in the flesh or body of St. Paul, and therefore was some inherent grief in himself, and not

[e] [Erasmus, after Chrysostom and Ambrose.]

any external trouble from without. 3. The *thorn in the flesh* St. Paul speaks of was not given him till after his being caught up into the third heaven, and into paradise; whereas St. Paul's troubles and persecutions for the Gospel's sake commenced from his very first giving up his name to Christ. 4. It became not St. Paul to pray so earnestly and so often, to have his persecutions removed from him, who could not but know, that they were his allotted portion, bequeathed to him in his very first conversion, Acts ix. 16. yea, and that all who should then live godly in Jesus Christ were of necessity *to suffer persecution*, 2 Tim. iii. 12. The chiefest colour for this interpretation is, that St. Paul doth indeed presently after make mention also of his persecutions and distresses for the Gospel's sake, verse 10. But of this I shall give a very clear and satisfactory account afterwards in this discourse.

Secondly, Some by the *thorn in the flesh* understand *uredinem libidinis*, which I am ashamed to translate. Yet it being a very common exposition, it will be necessary to shew the great absurdity and folly of it. 1. This interpretation contradicts the plain and express profession of St. Paul concerning himself, that he had the gift of continence, and that in so eminent a degree, that he wished all Christians were in this like himself, 1 Cor. vii. 7. 2. If this had been the *thorn in the flesh* St. Paul was troubled with, he had a remedy at hand, the same he proposed to others, and which he tells us he might himself have made use of as well as some other of the apostles, if he had seen occasion for it, viz. honest and honourable matrimony, 1 Cor. vii. 9. and ix. 5. 3. St. Paul when he wrote this Epistle was, by the compu-

tation of chronologers, about sixty years old: and it is a foul slur to so great and holy an apostle to imagine, that he should burn in that frozen age, which useth to extinguish, or at least to allay, those flames in the most unclean persons. 4. If this had been St. Paul's *thorn in the flesh*, he could not without blasphemy have said of it, ἐδόθη μοι, *it was given me*, viz. by God, the same gracious God, who in giving it intended to keep me from being undone by pride. The sparks of lust issue from hell, and lead also to those unquenchable flames. 5. If this had been the *thorn in the flesh*, St. Paul would have prayed for the removal of it, not only thrice, but a thousand times; yea he would never have given over, till by an unwearied importunity, he had obtained his desire; and the most holy God would not, could not have denied him so just and holy a request. Lastly, St. Paul's *thorn in the flesh* was something, wherewith, when he was denied the removal of it, he not only rested contented, but even *gloried in it*, verse 9. Now it had been the greatest impiety in him to have gloried in his impure motions and desires. And this same reason equally overthrows all those other interpretations that expound the text of any other sinful affection or infirmity in St. Paul. But let us proceed.

Thirdly, Others by the *thorn in the flesh* understand original sin, or the relics of it in St. Paul. But this interpretation likewise we may boldly pronounce absurd, not only for the reason last mentioned, but upon other accounts also. For, 1, original sin was not given to St. Paul by God: nor, 2, was it given after his rapture into the third heaven, and into paradise; but it was, howsoever you define it, born with him.

Fourthly, Some there are that by the *thorn in the flesh* understand solicitations to pride. But this is the most senseless interpretation of all. For besides that, 1. this could not be said to be given by God; nor, 2. could it be called *a thorn in the flesh*, pride being a vice seated in the mind; 3. this interpretation implies a manifest contradiction. For pride was the disease to be cured in St. Paul, and therefore could not be itself the cure or remedy.

Fifthly and lastly, Others expound the *thorn in the flesh* of some bodily disease in St. Paul, extraordinary painful and troublesome to him; which he aptly calls *a thorn*, for its sharpness and pungency; and *a thorn in his flesh*, for the seat of it, which was his body. This is the consentient interpretation of the most ancient doctors of the church, who have happened to make mention of this text. And they are the most likely men to have understood the history of St. Paul, and what (at least extraordinarily) happened to him. Irenæus, in his fifth book, chap. 3. cites my text, and expressly expounds the *thorn in the flesh*, of some bodily infirmity of the apostle, such as might shew him to be a mortal man. For after he had alleged my text, he thus glosseth upon it. "What "therefore, (may some say,) would the Lord then "have his apostle so buffeted, and to undergo such "an infirmity? Yea, saith the word: for strength is "perfected in weakness. For how could man have "learnt, that he himself is infirm, and by nature mor-"tal, and God immortal and powerful, unless he had "experimented what is in both[f]?" that is, both the

[f] Quid ergo? (dicet enim aliquis) voluit ergo Dominus apostolum suum sic colaphizari, et talem sustinere infirmitatem? Etiam,

infirmity of man and the power of God. And he applies this to the error of those, "who look upon the "infirmity of the flesh or body of man, but do not "consider the power of him who raiseth it from the "dead[g]." Tertullian, in his book *De Pudicitia*, c. 13. speaking of St. Paul's *thorn in the flesh*, and his being buffeted, adds, "by a pain, as they say, in his "ear or head[h]." Where it is observable that he delivers this, not as his own conceit, but as a received tradition in his time. St. Cyprian, in his book *De Mortalitate*, understands St. Paul's *thorn in the flesh* to be "many and grievous torments of his flesh "and body[i]." And St. Jerom also, in his notes upon Gal. iv. 13. assures us, that this was the ancient tradition. "They report," saith he, "that he often suf-"fered a most grievous pain in his head, and that "this was the messenger of Satan given him to buf-"fet him[k]." I will not determine what particular sickness or infirmity of body St. Paul was troubled with; whether a violent headache, which, as you have seen, was the ancient tradition; or the cholic, as Aquinas upon the place tells us some thought; or the falling sickness, as others have imagined; (a fit dis-

dicit verbum; virtus enim in infirmitate perficitur. Quemadmodum enim didicisset homo quoniam ipse quidem infirmus et natura mortalis, Deus autem immortalis et potens, nisi id quod est in utroque didicisset experimento?

[g] Qui infirmitatem intuentur carnis, virtutem autem ejus qui suscitat eam a mortuis non contemplantur.

[h] Per dolorem, ut aiunt, auriculæ vel capitis.

[i] Carnis et corporis multa et gravia tormenta.

[k] Tradunt eum gravissimum capitis dolorem sæpe perpessum, et hunc esse Satanæ angelum, qui appositus ei fuerit, ut ipsum colaphizaret.

ease indeed to cure an aspiring pride;) but it seems plain and evident to me, that some bodily sickness or infirmity it was. For,

1. In the answer of God to St. Paul's prayers for the removal of *his thorn in the flesh*, it is expressly said, *For my strength is made perfect in weakness*[l]. Where it is known the Greek word ἀσθένεια literally and most properly signifies *infirmity or weakness of body*. And why we should here depart from the propriety of the word, I understand not. It is true, in the next verse, after the mention of infirmity, it presently follows, *in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake.* But this is not added exegetically, or by way of exposition, but by accumulation: as if he had said, This my bodily infirmity, though attended with many other grievous and sharp afflictions and persecutions, I bear by the grace of God, yea and take pleasure in it and them. And accordingly St. Cyprian, occasionally discoursing on the text, in the place but now cited, joins St. Paul's "many and grievous torments "of body[m]" with his other calamities, with his sufferings and persecutions.

2. St. Paul himself plainly enough confirms this interpretation of the ancients, Gal. iv. 13, 14. *Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.* There is little doubt to be made but that St. Paul's *thorn in his flesh*[n], and his *temptation in his*

[l] Ἡ γὰρ δύναμίς μου ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελειοῦται.

[m] Corporis multa et gravia tormenta. [n] Σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί.

flesh[o], are one and the same thing. Now *his temptation in his flesh* he expressly here expounds to be *an infirmity of his flesh*[p], or body. And it is observable, that he speaks of such an *infirmity of his flesh* as was notorious, open, and visible to the Galatians, and therefore such as, if they had not looked any farther than his flesh or body, they might have despised him for. This one consideration closely attended to utterly overthrows all the other interpretations, and confirms the last exposition of the ancient doctors, which I follow.

St. Paul's *thorn in his flesh*, or *his temptation in his flesh*, could not be any inward motion of original sin, or irritation to uncleanness, or suggestion of pride, it being something outward and apparent to the Galatians. Nor could it be his sufferings and persecutions for the Gospel's sake. For these all of them could not, without a very great impropriety, be called the *infirmity of his flesh*, or body. Nor could they with any colour of reason make him despicable in the eyes of the Galatians, but rather on the contrary they must needs render him more honourable and glorious; when at the same time they saw the preacher of the Gospel to them a stout and courageous confessor for that Gospel which he preached. Nor could this *thorn* and *temptation in his flesh* be any secret assaults of Satan upon his body or mind, (as some from the appellation given it, *the messenger of Satan*, have collected,) for these were not visible to the Galatians or others. It remains therefore, that it was some extraordinary bodily infirmity of St. Paul that he carried about him, which might

[o] Ὁ πειρασμὸς ἐν τῇ σαρκί. [p] Ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκός.

have rendered him despicable in the eyes of the Galatians and others, to whom he preached the Gospel, if they had not at the same time seen the power of God appearing in the miracles he wrought, and in the excellency of his doctrine, and in his other virtues. And it is very probable that the infirmity of his body, which thus continually haunted him, was interpreted by his malicious adversaries to be a judgment of God upon him.

Lastly, St. Paul himself again elsewhere informs us, that he was generally despised by the adversaries of his preaching, upon the account of some notable bodily weakness or infirmity of his. For he represents the false apostles as thus objecting against him. *His letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible*, 2 Cor. x. 10. Where it is in the Greek his bodily presence is ἀσθενὴς, infirm, weak, or sickly, and his speech contemptible; as there are many bodily diseases that have a great influence on the speech, and render it less grateful and acceptable. And the same bodily infirmity he in divers other places mentions, as the great disadvantage which he laboured under in the preaching of the Gospel. See especially 1 Cor. ii. 3. *And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.* And 2 Cor. xiii. 3, 5, 9. *Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfec-*

tion. By all which it seems to me very plain, that St. Paul had some notorious visible infirmity in his body, that might expose him to contempt with those, who looked no farther than the outward appearance, and was designed by God as a means to keep him humble. He was a weak, sickly apostle; and therefore despicable to many. In this also like his genuine son Timothy, to whom he gives this advice, *Drink no longer water, but drink a little wine, for thy stomach's sake, and for thy often infirmities* [q], 1 Tim. v. 23. There was this difference between the infirmity of the one and the other, that St. Paul's was extraordinary and supernatural; but Timothy's an effect of his natural constitution. Which brings me to the third inquiry.

In the third and last place therefore we are to inquire, what St. Paul means by *the messenger of Satan.* And here it is agreed by the generality of interpreters, that this signifies the same thing with the former, viz. the *thorn in the flesh.* And indeed in the Greek, as well as in our translation, there is no conjunction, but a plain apposition; it is not said, *a thorn in the flesh and a messenger of Satan;* but *a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan.* Now we have evidently shewn, that St. Paul's *thorn in his flesh* was some troublesome disease in his body. It remains therefore that we inquire, why this bodily disease is called ἄγγελος Σατᾶν, *the messenger of Satan.* The learned Grotius here answers in short, because it was "a disease [r]," by God's permission and appointment, "sent or inflicted on him

[q] Καὶ διὰ τὰς πυκνάς σου ἀσθενείας.

[r] Morbus a Satana immissus.

"by Satan." And I doubt not but he is in the right. For it was an ancient opinion of the Jews, that many diseases are without natural causes inflicted on men by evil angels. Nor is it any wonder that Satan should have such a power, by God's permission, over the bodies of the best of men, to him that reads the history of Job, the most perfect man of his age, Job ii. 6, 7. *And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold he is in thy hand, but save his life. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown.* But there is a text also in the New Testament that plainly warrants this exposition. We read, Luke xiii. 11. of a woman, who had *a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years together,* an extraordinary infirmity, whereby her body was doubled, and so bowed together, that in all that time she could in no wise lift up herself.

That this was a supernatural affliction is plain from the words of our Saviour, ver. 16. *And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond?* Here we have a bodily infirmity continuing upon a daughter of Abraham for eighteen years together, and this infirmity attributed to the power (permitted him by God) of Satan. And my text tells us of one of the most excellent sons of Abraham, continually vexed with a bodily infirmity, and that *the messenger of Satan.* The good woman was in her infirmity bound by Satan for eighteen years: St. Paul in his infirmity was buffeted by Satan (as it is very probable) to the end of his life.

And so much for the explanation of my text;

wherein I have been of necessity so large, that I have little time left me for the handling of the useful observations that may be drawn from it. But indeed such a text thoroughly opened, yields of itself profitable matter enough to entertain the intelligent hearer, that knows how to improve it. Yet for the help of the weaker sort, give me leave to point out some observations that naturally flow from the text thus explained.

Observ. 1. The best of men, those that excel in the gifts and graces of God, are liable to the worst of vices, viz. pride.

Mr. Calvin's note on my text is very apposite; "Let us diligently consider who it is that here "speaks. A man that had conquered infinite "dangers, torments, and other evils; that had tri- "umphed over all the enemies of Christ; that had "shook off the fear of death; and lastly, had re- "nounced the world; and yet this man had not as "yet wholly subdued his inclinations to pride: nay, "he was still engaged in so doubtful a combat with "it, that he could not conquer without being him- "self beaten and buffeted [s]." Pride, as it was the first sin of man, so it is his last too; and is therefore not unfitly called by one *indusium animæ*, the vice that sticks most closely to us, and the last we shall put off and be rid of.

Other vices are found only in evil actions, but this ariseth out of our best works. Nay, this sin ofttimes springs out of its contrary virtue, and a man is apt to be proud of his own humility; and the humble man, as soon as he knows his own humility, is in danger of losing it.

[s] Consideremus diligenter quis hic loquatur, &c.

When a man hath arrived to the top of all virtue, he is not out of all danger of this vice; nay, he is then in most danger of it. "It is a rare thing to excel "many, and to despise none[t]." It is a hard matter for a man to be cried up for an eminent saint, and an excellent person, and not to let in through his ears into his soul the infection of pride and vanity. Few men have such steady heads as to be able to stand upon the spires and pinnacles of glory without giddiness.

It was the sin of pride, as divines generally believe, that ruined a multitude of the angelic host. Those once most glorious spirits, walking upon the battlements of heaven, grew dizzy with their own greatness, and fell down into a state of utter darkness and extreme misery. Upon whose fall one observes, that pride is a vice highly descended, and commonly entailed on the most highborn and excellent minds; because it was first born in heaven, and conceived in the womb of an angel's mind. Let us therefore (being taught by these examples) so war with all other lusts and vices, as to bend our chiefest force against this sin of pride; and when we have done our best, we shall find the conquest difficult enough.

But are the best of saints, the most excellent persons, only subject to this worst of vices? No, certainly; for pride is nothing else but an overweening opinion of a man's own excellence; and such an opinion they may and often do entertain who have no real excellence in themselves. The beggar may

[t] Rarum est multis præeminere et neminem despicere.

dream that he is a king, and the fool may entertain himself in his paradise, though it be a mere creature of his own foolish fancy. Yea there are some, who are proud by a kind of creation, that is, proud of nothing. But how intolerable, how utterly inexcusable, is this kind of pride! That such a man as St. Paul, the great thaumaturgus or wonder-worker, the most learned and laborious of all the apostles, the doctor of the Gentiles, the man of the highest revelations, the guest of paradise and of the third heaven, in both which he was entertained with the discovery of unutterable mysteries; that such a man as this should be tempted to pride is not so wonderful, though in him pride would have been a grievous sin. How insufferable then is their pride, who come infinitely short of any such excellencies, and yet are actually as proud as St. Paul was only in danger to be! What a prodigy of pride is he, that thinks himself to be something (yea and μέγας τις, *some great one too*) when he is nothing! as St. Paul expresseth it, Gal. vi. 3.

If it would have been a fault in that great apostle to have been lifted up in his own conceit, though advanced by God to so very high a perfection of science and sanctity; what a crime is it in us to be exalted by self-opinion, who indeed creep in the dust, and have so little or nothing, either of intellectual or moral endowments, to pride ourselves in, who know so little, and practise much less!

What a sad sight is it to behold a young novice, having read a dry system in theology, and attained to some remembrance of the common objections and solutions therein, strutting as if he had already

reached the very top of that lofty and sublime science, and were become the most consummate and complete divine!

But how much more lamentable an object is the ignorant and illiterate mechanic; who, because his memory serves him to quote a great many texts of Scripture, and that by chapter and verse, (though the sense of the tenth part of them at least he is far from understanding,) and to repeat after a sorry fashion some sermons he hath heard, thinks himself wiser than those very teachers to whom he owes all his little scraps and fragments of knowledge, and sufficiently qualified for a critic, and judge of sermons and orthodoxy; and consequently undertakes to be a teacher himself, and perhaps sets up for the master of a new sect, and prefers his own small wisdom before the wisdom of the whole church wherein he lives, and dares tax the most deliberate and advised sanctions and constitutions of the learned and holy Fathers of it, of imprudence and folly, yea and impiety too! I am sick of these men; and therefore beseeching God to give them a righter understanding of themselves, I leave them, and proceed to my second observation.

Observ. 2. Pride is so dangerous a disease and vice of the soul, that God thinks fit to prevent or cure it in his servants, by the sharpest and severest remedies.

St. Paul shall have *a thorn in his flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him*, rather than be lifted up *above measure:* that he might not fall into the Devil's sin, God permits him to fall under the Devil's scourge; and he that could by his apostolic authority deliver up others, is himself in a manner delivered

up to Satan. It must be a desperate disease that requires so desperate a remedy.

The man inclined to pride must *perire, ne pereat,* "be undone, that he may not be undone;" that is, he must be undone by some grievous affliction and calamity in this world, that he may not be undone for ever in the other.

But let us learn humility at a cheaper rate, endeavouring of ourselves to be humble, before we are humbled by God, and not forcing our gracious Lord to use his sharper medicines for the cure of our pride. Let us watch every thought of vanity that ariseth in our minds, and presently suppress it, as a spark of fire, that may be kindled into a devouring flame. Let us fix our thoughts on the worst of ourselves, and the best of us shall find matter enough there to keep us humble.

Observ. 3. The gift of miracles, and particularly the gift of curing diseases without natural medicine, was so given by Christ to his apostles, as not to be at their own absolute disposal, but to be dispensed by them as the Giver should think fit.

This is no loose or far-fetched collection from my text, but such as upon a little consideration offers itself to every man. St. Paul was as great a worker of wonders as any of the chiefest apostles: he could and did frequently cure all manner of the most incurable diseases where he preached the Gospel, yea and raised the dead to life; and yet he could not rid himself of that *thorn in the flesh,* that painful disease, which Satan, by God's permission, had inflicted on him. What account can be given of this, but that which we have already given in the observation mentioned, that The gift of miracles, &c.? Upon the same

account it was, that the same St. Paul cured not his dearly beloved son Timothy of his bad stomach or digestion, and the many ill effects consequent thereon, but wrote to him rather as a physician than an apostle, advising him in the place above mentioned, 1 Tim. v. 23. to *drink no longer water, but to drink a little wine for his stomach's sake, and for his often infirmities;* that is, by this means to palliate and alleviate those infirmities which God thought fit to continue on him; though by his apostles, and by himself, he totally removed other more incurable diseases and distempers from those to whom the Gospel was preached, as occasion required. Hereby it appeared, that the gift of curing diseases, without the help of art or nature, was indeed a gift, and a gift of God, and so given by him to his apostles, that they could not exercise it arbitrarily, and at their own pleasure, but only to whom, when, where, and how God pleased, and should direct them to make use of that power: that so the glory of all the wonderful cures wrought by them might at last redound to God the author, and not to man the instrument.

And (by the way) perhaps this is the best account that can be given of the relic and remainder of the primitive miraculous gift of healing, for some hundreds of years past, visible in this our nation, and annexed to the succession of our Christian kings: I mean the cure of that otherwise generally incurable disease, called *morbus regius*, or the king's evil. That divers persons desperately labouring under it have been cured by the mere touch of the royal hand, assisted with the prayers of the priests of our church attending, is unquestionable, unless the faith of all

our ancient writers, and the consentient report of hundreds of most credible persons in our own age, attesting the same, be to be questioned[u]. And yet, they say some of those diseased persons return from that sovereign remedy *re infecta*, without any cure done upon them. How comes this to pass? God hath not given this *gift of healing* so absolutely to our royal line, but that he still keeps the reins of it in his own hand, to let them loose, or restrain them, as he pleaseth. But I go forward.

Observ. 4. God doth sometimes lay very severe bodily and outward afflictions on the best of his servants.

St. Paul himself had his *thorn in the flesh*, a painful disease and sickness, ever and anon molesting him. And is any of us better than that blessed apostle? But I must not dwell on this.

Observ. 5. Good men, when they pray for the removal of outward evils, are not always heard, God purposing to continue the affliction on them for their spiritual good.

St. Paul prayed earnestly and frequently for the removal of that *thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan*, sent him by God to prevent his being lifted up *above measure*, and yet was not heard. And yet he was heard too, God promising a sufficient grace to support him under the affliction which lay upon him. Which brings me to my last observation.

Observ. 6. When God sees it for our good to continue any bodily or outward affliction on us, we must submit to his will, and comfort ourselves with the

[u] See especially Bradwardine *De Causa Dei*, l. 1. c. 1. coroll. par. 32. p. 39.

assurance of his sufficient grace, and his strength to be made perfect in our weakness.

This is the plain sense of the ninth verse, where the oracle of God immediately delivered to St. Paul, *My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness*, is really spoken through St. Paul to all that are in the same or the like circumstances with him.

Perhaps it is the case of some of us, that we labour under some painful or troublesome infirmity of body, or else are pressed with some other grievous outward affliction, which we have used all means within our power to be rid of, and often with earnestness prayed unto God to be delivered from, and yet still remain under the same calamity. If this be our case, let us not be dismayed or cast down, but remember that the great apostle's condition was much the same with ours. And provided we be true and faithful servants of God, as St. Paul was, (though not in so eminent a degree as he,) let us, I say, be assured, that the words of God in my text, *My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness*, are as certainly spoken to every one of us as ever they were to him. And indeed there is a general promise of God, of the same import, delivered by the same apostle to all true Christians, 1 Cor. x. 13. *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* Wherefore let us comfort one another with these words.

And let us consider farther, that our life here is but short, and consequently that no trouble attending

it can be long. We may say of every affliction, "It "is but a little cloud that will soon pass away, vanish, "and be gone[x]." Trust in God, faithfully serve him, and be patient; *yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*, Heb. x. 37. The Lord our Redeemer is at hand, and his harbinger, Death, by hasty paces marcheth towards us; a messenger that ought in reason to be most welcome to all afflicted persons, who by faith and a good life, or at least by a timely and true repentance for a bad one, are prepared to meet and receive him. This physician will infallibly cure all our maladies and distempers, and put a final period to all our troubles and afflictions. This will pass us into a state of perfect rest and peace, in which there shall be no more sickness or sorrow, because no more sin. Yea, this will lead us into that presence, and to that right hand of God, where there *is fulness of joy*, and where *there are pleasures for evermore*, Psalm xvi. 11.

For which blessed estate, God of his infinite mercy fit us, and thereinto in his due time admit us all, through Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour.

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, adoration and worship, now and for evermore, *Amen*.

[x] Nubecula est cito transitura.

SERMON VI.[a]

A VISITATION SERMON CONCERNING THE GREAT DIFFICULTY AND DANGER OF THE PRIESTLY OFFICE.

JAMES iii. 1.

My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

THE text may at first sight appear to some to stand at a very wide distance from the present occasion. But I hope, by that time I have spent a little pains in explaining it, I shall set the text and occasion at a perfect agreement.

The words therefore are by interpreters diversly expounded. Among the rest, two interpretations there are which stand as the fairest candidates for our reception.

1. Some understand the *masters* here in my text, to be proud, malicious censors, and judges of other men's actions, and so expound the text as a prohibition of rash and uncharitable judgment, and make it parallel to that of our Saviour, Matt. vii. 1. *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* Be not rash and hasty

[a] [Published in London, 1714, together with his Charge to his Diocese, and his Circular Letter to the Clergy. The title-page was, A Companion for the Candidates of Holy Orders; or, The Great Importance and Principal Duties of the Priestly Office. This Sermon was evidently written many years before; and Nelson tells us, (Life, p. 401.) that the bishop told his son on the night but one before he died to strike out the preface, as *too juvenile.*]

in censuring or judging the actions of others, or speaking evil of them, considering that by so doing you will but procure a greater judgment of God upon yourselves. The chief, if not the only argument for this interpretation, is the context of the apostle's discourse, which in the following verses is wholly spent against the vices of the tongue. But,

2. Others there are who interpret the *masters* in the text to be pastors or teachers in the church of God; and accordingly understand the words as a serious caution against the rash undertaking of the pastoral office or function, as an office attended with great difficulty and danger, a task very hard to be discharged, and wherein whoever miscarries, makes himself thereby liable to a severer judgment of Almighty God.

This latter interpretation (with submission I speak it) seems to me, almost beyond doubt, the genuine sense of the apostle. The reasons are evident in the text itself. For, 1. unless we thus expound the words, it will be hard to give a rational account of this word πολλοὶ, *many*, why it should be inserted. For if we understand those masters the apostle speaks of, to be rash judges and censurers of others, it is most certain then, one such would be too many, and the multiplicity of them would not be the only culpable thing. But on the other side, if we receive the latter interpretation, the account of the word πολλοὶ is easily rendered, according to the paraphrase of Erasmus, thus, "Let not pastors or teachers be too "vulgar and cheap among you; let not every man "rush into so sacred an office and function[b]." And

[b] Ne passim ambiatis esse magistri.

Drusius's gloss on this very word is remarkable: ***Summa summarum; quo pauciores sunt magistri, eo melius agitur cum populo. Nam ut medicorum olim Cariam, ita doctorum et magistrorum nunc multitudo perdit rempublicam. Utinam vanus sim.*** I need not English the words to those whom they concern.

2. If we embrace any other interpretation, we must of necessity depart from the manifest propriety of the Greek word which our translators render ***masters.*** The word is διδάσκαλοι, which whoso understands the first elements of the Greek tongue, know to be derived from διδάσκω, ***to teach,*** and so literally to signify ***teachers. Be not many teachers.***

And so accordingly the Syriac renders it by a word which the learned Drusius tells us is parallel to the Hebrew מורים, which undoubtedly signifies ***doctors*** or ***teachers.***

These reasons are sufficient to justify our interpretation, though I might add the authority of the ancients, who generally follow this sense, as also the concurrent judgment of our most learned modern annotators, Erasmus, Vatablus, Castalio, Estius, Drusius, Grotius, with many others.

As for the connection of the words thus explained, with the following discourse of the apostle, I suppose this very easy account may be given of it. The moderation and government of the tongue, (on which St. James, in the sequel of the chapter, wholly insists,) though it be a general duty, (for there is no man's tongue so lawless as to be exempted from the dominion of right reason and religion,) yet it is a duty wherein the pastor or teacher hath a peculiar concern. The minister's tongue is a chief tool and in-

strument of his profession, that which *ex officio* he must often make use of: he lies under a necessity of speaking much and often; and the Wise Man tells us, *In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin*, Prov. x. 19. And certainly there is scarce any consideration more powerful, to deter a man from undertaking the office of a teacher, than this; how extremely difficult and almost impossible it is, for a man that speaks much and often, so to govern his tongue as to speak nothing that either is itself unfit, or in an unfit time, or after an undue manner; and yet how highly every teacher is concerned so to do.

So that it is a very easy knot to fasten my text to the next verse, thus: Let not every man ambitiously affect the office of a teacher in the church of God, considering that it is an office of great difficulty and danger, *for in many things we offend all; if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man*, &c. As if he had said, As there are many ways whereby the best of us do offend, so there is no way whereby we so easily fall into sin, as by that slippery member the tongue; and there is no man more exposed to this danger of transgressing with the tongue than the teacher, who makes so much and so frequent use of it. So that the teacher is τέλειος ἀνὴρ, "a rare and perfectly accomplished man "indeed," that hath acquired the perfect government of his tongue. He that can do that, who fails not in that piece of his duty, may easily also bridle his whole body, i. e. rightly manage himself in all the other parts of his pastoral office. But this, as it is very necessary, so it is extremely difficult, and therefore *be not many teachers* [c].

[c] Μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε.

To this it will not be amiss to add what Grotius wisely observes, that the admonition of the apostle concerning the vices of the tongue, subjoined to the caution in my text, "is chiefly directed against brawl-"ing and contentious disputers[d];" such teachers as abuse their liberty of speaking unto loose discourses, and take occasion from thence to vent their own spleen and passions: men of intemperate spirits and virulent tongues, troublers rather than teachers of the people, whose tongues are indeed *cloven tongues of fire*, but not such as the apostles were endowed with from above; as serving to burn, rather than to enlighten; to kindle the flames of faction, strife, and contention, rather than those of piety and charity in the church of God.

And indeed the direful and tragical effects, which the apostle in this chapter ascribes to the evil tongue, as that *it is a fire, a world of iniquity, defiling the whole body, setting on fire the course of nature, full of deadly poison* [e], &c. are such as are not so easily producible by the tongue of a private man as of a teacher; "whose discourse," saith Erasmus, "spreads "its poison by so much the more generally and effec-"tually, as the authority of the speaker is greater, "and his advantage also of speaking to many[f]."

Having removed this seeming rub in the context, I return again to the text itself; wherein you may please to observe, 1. A serious dissuasive from the rash undertaking of the pastoral office: *My brethren, be not many masters,* or teachers. 2. A solid argu-

[d] Maxime directa est in rixosos disputatores.

[e] Φλογίζουσα τὸν τρόχον τῆς γενέσεως.

[f] Cujus sermo hoc latius ac periculosius spargit suum venenum, quod auctoritate dicentis commendetur.

ment or reason to enforce it, drawn from the difficulty and the danger thereof; *knowing that we shall receive*, &c. μεῖζον κρίμα, *a greater* or severer *judgment*; i. e. God will require more of us that are teachers than of others; we shall not escape or be acquitted in the divine judgment at so easy a rate as they. There is a place in the excellent Book of Wisdom that is exactly parallel to my text, and gives great light to it, chap. vi. 5. *A sharp judgment shall be to them that are in high places* [g]. Where the οἱ ὑπερέχοντες, those that are *in high places* in the state, answer to the διδάσκαλοι in my text, the *teachers* in the church: the κρίσις ἀπότομος, *the sharp*, or *the precise and severe judgment*, to the μεῖζον κρίμα, *the greater judgment* in the text.

I shall not at all insist on the first branch of the division, the dissuasive, as remembering that I am to preach not an Ordination, but a Visitation Sermon; and to discourse, not to candidates of holy orders, but to such as are already engaged in that sacred profession. I come therefore to the reason or argument in the text, (as of very much concernment to all that are in the priestly office,) drawn from the difficulty and danger thereof. To represent both which, as fully as my short allowance of time, and much shorter scantling of abilities, will permit, shall be my present business.

And first, as to the difficulty of the teacher's office, it is a very great difficulty fully to explain it. So many are the branches of his duty, that it were a tedious labour to reckon them up. Lord! what a task is it then to discharge them! I shall content myself

[g] Κρίσις ἀπότομος ἐν τοῖς ὑπερέχουσι γίνεται.

therefore *rudi Minerva* briefly and only in general to describe the chiefest requisites that are necessary to constitute a complete teacher in the church of God, and even by that little which I shall say, I doubt not but it will appear, how very formidable, how tremendous an undertaking that function deserves to be accounted. The teacher's office then requires a very large knowledge, a great prudence, an exemplary holiness. And surely much is required of him of whom these things are required.

1. Then, the first requisite to the office of a teacher is a very large knowledge. The very name of his office implies this; he is διδάσκαλος, *a teacher;* and he that is such must be, as the apostle requires, 1 Tim. iii. 2. *apt, or fit to teach*[h]. And this he cannot be, unless he be *well learned*[i] and instructed himself, and furnished with a plentiful measure of divine knowledge. God himself, by the prophet Malachi, chap. ii. 7. requires that the *priest's lips* דַּעַת יִשְׁמְרוּ *should keep or preserve knowledge.* Methinks the expression is more emphatical than is ordinarily conceived. It seems to imply that the priest should be a kind of repository or treasury of knowledge, richly furnished with knowledge himself, and able also abundantly to furnish and supply the wants of those that shall at any time have recourse to him for instruction. And therefore it presently follows: *and they* (that is, the people) *shall seek the law at his mouth.* Yea, the words import that the priest should be a treasury of knowledge not to be exhausted.

He must have knowledge, not only to spend, but

[h] Διδακτικὸς, aptus, sive idoneus ad docendum.

[i] Διδακτὸς, doctus.

to keep; not like those that live from hand to mouth, or whose stock of knowledge is quickly spent in a few sermons, but he must have something still reserved and laid up in store. Methinks our Saviour doth excellently expound this text, though it be by a parable, Matt. xiii. 52. *Every scribe that is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old;* where the γραμματεὺς or *scribe* is the same among the Jews with the νομοδιδάσκαλος, *the teacher or expounder of the law.* And it is the usual custom of our Saviour, as Grotius observes, "by names in use among the Jews, to express "such offices as were to be in the Christian church[k]." The γραμματεὺς then, or scribe, is the same with the διδάσκαλος, or teacher, afterwards in the church of Christ. This scribe is said by our Saviour to be *instructed unto*, or for, *the kingdom of heaven*[l], i. e. well prepared, provided, furnished for the preaching of the Gospel. And to shew that he is so, he is compared to the householder, who for the maintaining of his family, and the entertainment of his guests all the year long, is supposed to have an ἀποθήκη or repository for provisions, (called here his θησαυρὸς, *his treasure*,) and there to have laid in provisions καινὰ καὶ παλαιὰ *both new and old*, i. e. a great store and abundance, provisions of all sorts and kinds. As the Spouse in the Canticles tells her beloved, chap. vii. 13. *At our gates are all manner of fruits, both new and old, which I have laid up for thee.* This kind of hospitality (however by the iniquity of an ungrateful sa-

[k] Nominibus apud Judæos receptis significare munia, quæ futura erant in ecclesia Christiana.

[l] Μαθητευθεὶς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν.

crilegious age he may be disabled from exercising the other) is the indispensable duty of the pastor or teacher. He must keep a table well furnished with these heavenly provisions for all comers.

The knowledge of a teacher, we shall easily grant, extends itself into a very large compass, if we consider what that science is that he is to teach; theology, "the art of arts, and the science of sciences[m]," as Nazianzen speaks; the queen and mistress of all other disciplines, to which they do all but *ancillare*, perform the office of handmaids, and yet in so doing they are of use and service to her.

And upon that account, the divine, if he will be complete, must be *πανεπιστήμων*, must have compassed the *ἐνκυκλοπαιδεία* in the modern and more noble signification of the word; i. e. the whole circle of arts and sciences. And he that hath so done, *illi des nominis hujus honorem*, let him pass for a perfect divine, he only is adequate to so ample a title. But (God be thanked) this is only the heroic perfection, not the necessary qualification of a teacher. A man may very well content himself to sit in a much lower form, and yet sit safely; he may move in a far inferior orb, and yet give much light, and communicate a benign and useful influence to the church of God. Let us view therefore the necessary parts of theology itself, wherein the teacher cannot be ignorant or uninstructed, but to the very great detriment of his disciples, and his own greater shame and hazard. How ample a field have we still before us! Here is theology positive, polemical, moral, casuistical, and all most necessary for the teacher.

[m] Τέχνη τεχνῶν καὶ ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστημῶν.

As for positive divinity, or the knowledge of those necessary speculative truths that are revealed in Scripture, a man can no more be a divine that is unacquainted with this, than he can be a grammarian that understands not the very first elements of grammar. And yet of so abstruse, so sublime a nature are even these truths, that for a man rightly to apprehend them, and clearly to explain them, especially to the capacity of his duller hearers, is no very easy matter.

Polemical or controversial divinity is *theologia armata*, or that part of divinity which instructs and furnisheth a man with necessary weapons to defend the truth against its enemies. Now the good shepherd's office is not only to feed his sheep, but to secure them from the wolves, or else his care in feeding them serves only to make them the fatter and richer prey. And therefore St. Paul, Tit. i. 9. requires that the teacher should be able, *both by sound doctrine to exhort his hearers* [n], *as also to convince* or refute *the gainsayers* or opposers [o]. *Hæc non sunt τοῦ τυχόντος*, (as Grotius well glosseth on the text,) every man cannot do this, and yet every teacher must. The times wherein we live do much heighten the necessity of this study: for we may enforce this duty on all teachers, by the same melancholy argument that St. Paul doth in the forementioned text. The teacher, saith he, must be able *to convince gainsayers:* why so? he gives the reason, ver. 10, 11. *There are many unruly and vain teachers and deceivers, &c. whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not.* These unruly and vain teachers, these deceivers,

[n] Καὶ παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαινούσῃ.

[o] Καὶ τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἐλέγχειν.

were never certainly in a greater number than now they are. These men's mouths must be stopped, there is a necessity for it; for otherwise they will subvert whole houses, yea and pervert whole parishes. Not that we have any hopes in this age to stop the mouths of our opposers, so as to make them cease speaking; (for bawl they will to eternity; they are, as the apostle somewhere speaks, *unreasonable men*[p], that understand not, admit not of any topics; no argumentation, though never so convincing, will make them give back;) but so at least, as that they shall be able to speak little to the purpose, so as to satisfy sober, humble, docible persons, who have not passionately espoused an error, or, to speak in the apostle's phrase, *that are not given up to strong delusions, to believe lies, that they may be damned.* In a word, our fate in these days is much like that of the rebuilders of Jerusalem after the captivity, that were necessitated *every one, with one of his hands to work in the building, with the other to hold a weapon,* Nehem. iv. 17. With one hand we must build up our people in the doctrine of piety, with the other we must resist heretical opposers, who otherwise will demolish as fast as we build.

And to quicken us to this part of our study, methinks no consideration can be more forcible than this; to observe, where ministers are defective therein, with what triumph and ostentation deceivers carry souls captive, to the disgrace, not only of the persons, but also of the function of the teachers, yea and of truth itself, which is wounded thus through their sides, and bleeds through their weakness and folly.

[p] Ἄνθρωποι ἄτοποι.

But let us leave this thorny field of controversial, and step a little into the other more fruitful, of moral or practical divinity. Of this one speaks most truly: "The knowledge of controversies is made necessary "by heretics, the study of piety by God himself [q]." Theology is doubtless a practical science, nothing in it but what aims at this end. And therefore he that neglects this practical part of it, understands not the very design of his own profession. Without this a man deserves no more to be accounted a divine, than he a physician that understands little or nothing of therapeutics. It is true, there are some (otherwise not unlearned men) that despise this part of theology, as a vulgar, trivial, easy, obvious thing. But sure they very much disparage their own judgment, who let the world understand that they are of this mind. And the event commonly shews how much they are mistaken. For bring these doctors out of their academic cells, set them to preach in a country congregation, and they soon become the objects of laughter, or rather of pity to the wiser. To observe how they greedily snatch at every occasion of engaging in a controversy, and that perhaps such a one as was never before heard of by their hearers, but a controversy they had read in some of their books, though long ago dead and buried, thus manfully encountering ghosts and shadows. How learnedly they will discuss the barren subtleties of Aquinas or Scotus, which the poor souls no more understand, than if they had read them a lecture out of Cornelius Agrippa's Occult Philosophy. How, when they come to practicals, they are *velut in alium*

[q] Controversiarum scientiam necessariam fecerunt hæretici, studium pietatis Deus ipse mandavit.

mundum translati, "as if they were entered into a "new unknown world;" so frigid, barren, and lifeless are their discourses on those subjects. And may the same shame, or a serious repentance, attend all the contemners of this useful theology.

Lastly, There is casuistical divinity, which I distinguish from moral or practical, as a more noble species thereof, and which therefore deserves a distinct consideration. For though all casuistical divinity be practical, yet all practical divinity is not casuistical; for the design of casuistical divinity is to resolve only the dubious and difficult cases that refer to practice. How difficult this study is, every man that is not a very stranger therein will readily acknowledge. And the necessity thereof is evident: for what more necessary for a teacher, than to be able to resolve his people what their duty is in difficult cases? Teachers, no doubt, are purposely placed by God in the crossways, as Mercurial statues, not dead, but living speaking ones, directing the perplexed traveller towards the heavenly Jerusalem, and saying, (as it is in the prophet,) *This is the way, walk therein.* And the Lord by the prophet Malachi, ii. 7. tells us, that the priest should be such a one, as that the *people may seek the law at his mouth:* the law, i. e. the sense of the law, or what that duty is which the law obligeth them to in doubtful cases: a very oracle to be consulted by them on all occasions. It is true, the greatest oracle may be sometimes silenced by a greater difficulty: but an oracle altogether dumb is certainly a very lamentable contradiction.

I have all this while spoken nothing of the holy Scriptures, that deep and unsearchable mine, from

whence the divine is to fetch all his treasure. From hence he is to borrow the principles of all theology, positive, polemical, moral, casuistical; and therefore it is evident, that unless he be well studied in these, he must needs be defective in all the rest. He must needs be a weak divine that is not *mighty in the Scriptures* [s], as it is said of Apollos, Acts xviii. 24. And, Lord, how many things are necessary to give a man a right understanding of these sacred writings! I confess we are fallen into a very confident age, wherein to interpret Scripture is counted the most obvious and easy thing; and every mechanic, that scarce understands common sense, will venture on the expounding of these mysterious books. We have so childishly departed from the error of the Romish church, in asserting an inexplicable obscurity of the Scriptures, even in things necessary, that for fear of this Charybdis we are swallowed up in as dangerous a Scylla, to make the Scriptures even despicable and contemptible. For, as Nazianzen truly saith [t], "that which is thus easily understood, is generally with as much ease slighted and contemned." But we know who they are, "who run from one bad extreme into another [u]." For it is certain, that rightly to understand the holy Scriptures is a very difficult thing, especially for us who live at so great a distance from those times wherein they were written, and those persons and churches to whom they were directed. It is no slender measure of the knowledge of antiquity, history, philology, that is requisite to qualify a man for

[s] Δυνατὸς ἐν γραφαῖς.

[t] Τὸ ῥαδίως λῃπτὸν ἅπαν εὐκαταφρόνητον.

[u] Dum vitant vitia in contraria currunt.

such an undertaking. They know nothing of the holy Scriptures that know not this. And therefore those unlearned and ignorant men, that venture on the exposition of Scripture, being perfect strangers to these parts of learning, must of necessity wrest them to their own and their hearers destruction.

I cannot omit to take notice here of that common axiom, "A good textuary is a good divine [x];" and to observe, that it is most true, if rightly understood: if by a textuary, we mean him who hath not only a concordance of Scriptures in his memory, but also a commentary on them in his understanding; who thinks it not enough to be ready in alleging the bare words of Scripture, with the mention of chapter and verse where it is written, unless he know the sense and meaning of what he recites. The former every illiterate sectary is able to do, who can quote Scriptures by dozens and scores, the tithe whereof he understands not, and are little to his purpose: the latter is the proper commendation of the divine. Without this grain of salt, the aphorism but now mentioned most justly falls under the severe censure of our learned Prideaux: "A good textuary is a "good divine, say many, who understand not, mind "not, either the text, or divinity, or goodness[y]."

We have seen the necessary parts of theology rudely delineated, and yet even by this imperfect draught we may take an estimate, how large that man's knowledge ought to be, that is obliged to understand all these things.

[x] Bonus textualis, bonus theologus.

[y] Bonus textualis, bonus theologus, clamant quamplurimi, qui nec de textu, nec de theologia, nec de bonitate sunt soliciti.

I confess that here also (and I have as much reason to rejoice in it as most of my brethren) a latitude is to be allowed; and it were a cruelty worse than that of Procrustes, to stretch all men to the same giantlike proportion of knowledge that some attain to. But yet doubtless it is a wise and prudent severity, as Nazianzen speaks[z], "to measure every "teacher, and stretch him out to St. Paul's rules "and canons." And they, as we have already heard, require that he should be διδακτικὸς, *apt and fit to teach*, i. e. in some competent measure able to instruct his hearers in all these useful parts of theology.

2. I have discoursed so largely of the first requisite of the teacher's office, that if I gave over here, I had said enough to convince any sober person of the difficulty thereof. But yet this is not all. A very great prudence also is required in the teacher, or else his knowledge will be useless and unserviceable. Wisdom is the soul that animates and enlivens knowledge, without which a large knowledge is but like a huge carcass, a lifeless inactive thing. And if any man thinks that science and prudence are things inseparable, sad experience refutes him. Every learned man is not a wise man; and there are some who have read very many books, but very few men; who have dwelt so much in their studies, that they understand little abroad in the world, no not in their own little world, I mean their charges and parishes. There are some that have a large measure of the spirit of knowledge, but want the spirit of government, which yet is most neces-

[z] Παρεκτείνειν τοῖς Παύλου κάνοσι.

sary for him who is to be a guide of souls. Every teacher is concerned to be wise, both for himself and those committed to his charge. For himself, to take heed of men, that he be neither betrayed by false brethren, nor become a prey to the malice of professed enemies; to decline both the envy and contempt of his neighbours, to keep himself within the bounds of his calling, *to mind his own business*[a], &c. To this kind of wisdom belongs the advice of our Saviour, when sending forth his apostles, as innocent lambs amongst the wolves of that age; he cautions them to *be wise as serpents, and innocent as doves,* Matt. x. 16. i. e. to use all honest and sinless arts to secure themselves. But this is not the prudence which I principally intend; for if a minister be defective in this, he is no man's foe but his own; he hurts only himself, and that but in his temporal concerns.

I add therefore, that he is to be wise for those committed to his charge, lest by any indiscretion of his, he obstructs that which ought to be his great design and business, the eternal salvation of their souls. And here how many things are there which a teacher is concerned to understand! He must be wise so to frame his discourses, especially in public, that he speak nothing that may either offend the weak, or give advantage to the malicious; that his sermons may not only be good in themselves, but adapted and fitted to the necessity of his hearers; that he make choice of the most suitable and powerful arguments to enforce on them those Christian duties whereto he exhorts them. He must be wise in the govern-

[a] Τὰ ἴδια πράσσειν.

ment of his carriage and actions, distinguishing especially between lawfulness and expediency, and shunning, not only that which is directly sinful, but whatsoever is scandalous and offensive. He must be wise in his common converse with his people, that he be neither of too easy or of too morose and difficult an access; but especially he is to be careful of this in his freer conversation; that he indulge not himself any liberty more than ordinary, among those who will make an ill use of that wherein there was no ill intended. He is to be wise in the choice of his friends; not to inscribe any man into that catalogue, that may reflect any disparagement on his person or function. For, *qui non contemnitur a se, contemnitur a socio.* He must be wise, especially in the government of his own family: for, as the apostle excellently reasons, *if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?* 1 Tim. iii. 5. He must be wise to inquire into the state of his flock, and to discern their particular tempers and constitutions; and even to search into their hearts and secret inclinations. He must be wise to administer private counsels and reproofs, duly observing the circumstances of time, of place, of person, of disposition. For, as the wisest of men tells us, *a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver,* Prov. xxv. 11. These, and many other things, the teacher is deeply concerned to be well versed in; and what a task is this!

If it be objected, That prudence is a thing without our power, an arbitrary gift of God, which he bestows on whom he pleaseth, as he doth beauty, or wealth, or a good natural wit, and therefore cannot reasonably be imposed on a man as his

duty: I answer; If this prudence were wholly out of our election, yet this certainly was left to our free choice, whether we would undertake that office whereto so great prudence is requisite. We have obliged ourselves to it, by engaging in that function, that cannot be discharged without it. But indeed, this excellent gift of God is in a great degree put within our power, in conjunction with the divine assistance. We may and must endeavour for it, diligently study it, carefully observe things and persons, faithfully record experiments, consult wiser friends: but above all things we must take St. James's advice, *If any man want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him*, James i. 5. Especially if he desire it constantly, earnestly, and above all things in the world; if with Solomon he despise greatness and wealth, and all other secular advantages; and, before them all, desire this one thing of God, *that he would give him wisdom and knowledge to go in and out before the people committed to his charge and guidance*, 2 Chron. i. 10.

3. I come now to the last, though not the least of those requisites that are necessary to the office of a teacher, viz. an exemplary holiness. For of this I may say, as the apostle doth, speaking of the three theological graces, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. *And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.* So here, there remaineth knowledge, prudence, holiness, all three necessary requisites to make up a complete teacher, but the greatest of these is holiness. And what he farther says of the same grace of charity, in the beginning of the same chapter, may with a little change be ap-

plied also to our present purpose. If a man had πᾶσαν γνῶσιν, *all sorts of knowledge*, so as to be able to *understand all mysteries;* if he were prudent, beyond the prodigious measure of Solomon's wisdom; if those endowments were crowned in him, with an eloquence more than human, so that he were able to discourse like an angel; yet without this holiness he were as nothing, or at best but as *the sounding brass* or *tinkling cymbal.* The priest that is not *clothed with righteousness*, though otherwise richly adorned with all the ornaments of human and divine literature, and those gilded over with the rays of a seraphic prudence and sagacity, is yet but a naked, beggarly, despicable creature, of no authority, no interest, no use or service in the church of God. The unholy teacher, let him preach never so well, discourseth to little purpose; there will be no life in his doctrine, because his life is so destitute of the spirit of holiness; he will sooner damn his own soul, than save any man's else. His discourses, though armed with the most powerful oratory, will serve to move no other affection in his hearers than that of indignation against his hypocrisy and impudence, to hear him excellently declaim against a vice, of which himself is notoriously guilty; and they will say,

Loripedem rectus derideat, Æthiopem albus.

In a word, as a wise man well observes, "every no-"torious vice is infinitely against the spirit of govern-"ment, and depresses a man to an evenness with "common persons."

——Facinus quos inquinat æquat.

And when a man's authority is thus lost, he becomes a thing wholly useless in the church of God. Useless, did I say? it were well if that were all: he

is the most pernicious creature that moves on God's earth; he serves to the worst purposes, to make men atheists, infidels, or heretics. Learned and knowing men, of ill lives, have been always the greatest stumblingblock in the church of God; their fall is not single, but attended with the ruin of many others; who, imitating the barbarous civility of those nations that use to solemnize the funerals of their great men by sacrificing a great part of their families, when their teachers damn themselves, are ready to die and perish with them for company. And the fallacy that ruins them is this; because some wise men live wickedly, they presently conclude that wickedness is the greatest wisdom: as if it were impossible for the will to choose contrary to the dictates of the understanding, or for a man that knows his duty not to do it. We of this age have reason to take special notice of this. For as Cicero, inquiring into the causes of those bold and unheard-of attempts that Catiline and his confederates made upon the commonwealth of Rome, presently gives this account; *Nos* (*dico aperte*) *nos consules desumus:* so when we are astonished at the prodigious blasphemies, heresies, and schisms of our times, and wonder at the cause of them, we may quickly resolve ourselves after the same manner; *Nos* (*dico aperte*) *nos pastores desumus.* For certainly all the arguments that heretics and sectaries have made use of to seduce our people from obedience unto the most excellent doctrine, liturgy, and discipline of our church, would have been accounted ridiculous sophisms, and no way served their wicked purposes, if they had not been furnished with a more powerful topic *ab exemplo* from the vicious lives of some clergymen. And as to this,

Pudet hæc opprobria nobis
Et dici potuisse, et non potuisse refelli.

I might here be very large in representing the necessity of holiness in a minister; but I shall only observe, that the wicked teacher sins with the highest aggravation of his guilt, and the least hope of his repentance; he is the greatest and most desperate sinner.

The greatest sinner; for either he is a person of more than ordinary knowledge, or he is not: if not, he sinned greatly in undertaking that office, to which so great a knowledge is requisite: if he be, his knowledge doubtless increaseth his guilt. *For he that knows his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes,* [Luke xii. 47.] Besides, he must needs sin with a very strange assurance, by living in that wickedness which he daily reproves and preaches against, and so becoming αὐτοκατάκριτος, *a condemned man* from his own mouth.

But that which I chiefly urge is this: the wicked teacher is, of all men living, in the most hopeless and desperate condition. It is usually observed of seamen, that dwell in the great deep, that if they are not very pious, for the most part they are desperately wicked; because they daily behold the wonders of the Lord, and besides live in a continual and very near danger, bordering upon the very confines of death, and being,

Quatuor aut septem digitis a morte remoti;

"but a few fingers' breadth divided from their fluid "graves." And if these considerations do not persuade them to *fear the Lord exceedingly,* as it is said of the mariners in Jonah i. 16. it argues that they are exceedingly hardened. The observation is

truer of the minister; if he be not a good man, he must needs be extremely bad; for he daily converseth in the great deep of the holy Scriptures, and there sees and reads such things, that if they do not effectually persuade him to piety, it is certain he is a man of an obdurate heart.

What remedy is likely to work this man's cure and repentance? Will the dreadful menaces and threats of God's word affright him? No; these are daily thundered out of his own mouth, and yet to him they are but *bruta fulmina.* Will the gracious promises of God allure him? No; he daily charms his hearers with these, but remains himself as the deaf adder. Will those excellent books of learned and pious men, that he reads in his study, work any good on him? No; he that slights God's word will little regard the words of men. Will the public prayers make him serious? No; he daily reads them, and his daily practice is contrary to his daily prayers. Will a medicine compounded of the flesh and blood of the Son of God (I mean the holy eucharist) do the miserable man any good? No; he hath frequently received those dear pledges of his Saviour's love, and yet is still as bad as ever, and so hath *trodden under foot the blood of the everlasting covenant,* wherewith he should have been sanctified. The Lord look upon this man, for there is no hope of him without a miracle of divine mercy: nay indeed all these excellent means, by being made familiar to him, have lost their efficacy upon him. Our Saviour, methinks, doth exeellently represent the hopeless condition of a vicious minister, by a parable, Matt. v. 13. where speaking to the apostles,

(considered, I suppose, as ministers of the word,) he tells them, *Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewithal shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men.* Salt, if it be good, is of excellent use to season many things; but if it become itself unsavoury, it is not only the most useless thing, *good for nothing but to be cast out,* &c. but irrecoverably lost; there is nothing will fetch putrid salt again; *for if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewithal shall it be salted?* Thus necessary is holiness in a minister, both for himself and others.

I have now done with the difficulty, and consequently with the danger of the pastoral office, represented from the three grand requisites thereunto; a very large knowledge, a great prudence, an exemplary holiness. I shall add but one consideration more, of itself abundantly sufficient to evince the whole; viz. that every teacher is accountable for the souls committed to his charge. This is the plain doctrine of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account,* &c. A dreadful consideration this! And St. Chrysostom tells us, that when he read that text "it did κατασείειν τὴν ψυχὴν cause a kind of earthquake within "him, and produce a holy fear and trembling in his "soul." And in his commentary on the text he thus exclaims, "Lord, how, how difficult, how hazardous an undertaking is this! What shall a man "say to those wretched men, that rashly thrust

"themselves into such an abyss of judgments? All "the souls that are committed to thy conduct, men, "women, and children, thou art to give an account "of[c]." He presently subjoins, "It is a wonder if any "ruler in the church be saved[d]:" a passionate hyperbole, expressing his deep sense of the extreme danger of the pastoral office.

It is true indeed, the excellent bishop speaks there of those of his own most sacred order, whose place and dignity in the church of God, as it is eminently higher, their charge greater, their inspection more extensive, so will their account be accordingly. But yet the same is true in its proportion of every clergyman, of what order soever he be. So St. Austin expressly; "If you mark it, (most dear "brethren,) you shall find that all the Lord's priests, "not only bishops, but also presbyters and ministers "of churches, stand in a very hazardous condition[e]." And he gives a shrewd reason for what he says a little after; "If at the day of judgment it will be a "hard task for every man to give an account of his "own soul, what will become of priests, of whom "God will require an account of the souls of so "many others committed to their charge[f]?" He concludes, *Magnum opus, sed gravis sarcina:*

[c] Βαβαὶ πόσος ὁ κίνδυνος! τί ἄν τις εἴποι πρὸς τοὺς ἀθλίους τοὺς ἐπιῤῥίπτοντας ἑαυτοὺς τοσαύτῃ τιμωριῶν ἀβύσσῳ; πάντων ὧν ἄρχεις γυναικῶν, καὶ ἀνδρῶν καὶ παίδων σὺ λόγον δίδως.

[d] Θαυμάζω εἰ τινά ἐστι τῶν ἀρχόντων σωθῆναι.

[e] Si diligenter attenditis (fratres charissimi) omnes sacerdotes Domini, non solum episcopos, sed etiam presbyteros et ministros ecclesiarum, in grandi periculo esse cognoscitis.

[f] Si enim pro se unusquisque vix poterit in die judicii rationem reddere, quid de sacerdotibus futurum est, a quibus sunt omnium animæ requirendæ?

" The care of souls is indeed a great work, a noble " undertaking, but yet a very grievous burden." He must be a man of very firm shoulders that is not crushed under it.

I have ofttimes, not without wonder and indignation, observed the strange confidence of empirics in physic, that dare venture on the practice of that noble art, which they do not at all understand; considering how for a little paltry gain they shrewdly hazard, or rather certainly destroy, the health and lives of men; and have judged them worthy of as capital and ignominious a punishment as those that kill men on the highways. But I have soon exchanged this meditation into another of more concernment to myself; and my indignation hath quickly returned into my own bosom, when I consider how much bolder and more hazardous an attempt it is for a man to venture on the priestly office; to minister to the eternal health and salvation of souls. How much skill is requisite to qualify a man for such an undertaking! how great care in the discharge of it! What a sad thing it would be, if through my unskilfulness or negligence any one soul should miscarry under my hands, or die and perish eternally!

We minister to souls. Souls! Methinks in that one word there is a sermon. Immortal souls! precious souls! one whereof is more worth than all the world besides, the price of the blood of the Son of God. I close up this with the excellent words appointed by the church to be read at the ordination of every priest: " Have always therefore in your " remembrance how great a treasure is committed " to your charge; for they are the sheep of Christ,

" which he bought with his death, and for whom he " shed his blood. The church and congregation " whom ye serve is his spouse and body. And if it " shall happen the same church, or any member " thereof, to take any hurt or hinderance by reason " of your negligence, you know the greatness of the " fault, and also the horrible punishment that will " ensue."

And now methinks I may use the apostle's words in another case, 1 Cor. i. 26. *Ye see your calling, brethren*[g]; you see how extremely difficult and hazardous an office it is we have undertaken; *who is sufficient for these things*[h]? Whose loins do not tremble at this fearful burden on his shoulders? Who would not be almost tempted to repent himself of his undertaking, and to wish himself any the meanest mechanic rather than a minister? But, alas! this were vain, yea sinful. We are engaged in this sacred office, and there is no retreating; we must now run the hazard, how great soever it be; in we are, and on we must. What shall we then say? what shall we do? Surely this is our best, yea our only course. Let us first prostrate ourselves at the feet of the Almighty God, humbly confessing and heartily bewailing our great and manifold miscarriages in this weighty undertaking; let us weep tears of blood (if it were possible) for the blood of souls, which we have reason to fear may stick upon our garments. The blood of souls, I say: for when I consider how many less discerned ways there be, whereby a man may involve himself in that guilt, as not only by an openly vicious example, but even by

[g] Βλέπετε τὴν κλῆσιν ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί.

[h] Καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα τίς ἱκανός; [2 Cor. ii. 16.]

a less severe, prudent, and wary conversation; not only by actions directly criminal, but by lawful actions, when offensive, (for by these the apostle assures us, *a man may destroy the soul of his weak brother, for whom Christ died*, Rom. xiv. 15.) not only by a gross negligence and supine carelessness, but by every lesser remission of those degrees of zeal and diligence, which are requisite in so important an affair: in a word, by not doing all that a man can, and lies within his power, to save the souls committed to his charge: I say, when I consider this, for mine own part I cannot, I dare not justify myself, or plead Not guilty before the great Judge of heaven and earth; but do upon the bended knees of my soul bewail my sin, and implore his pardoning grace and mercy, crying mightily unto him; *Deliver me from this bloodguiltiness, O my God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.* [Psalm li. 14.]

Having laid ourselves at God's feet, let us not lie idly there, but arise, and for the future do the work of God with all faithfulness and industry; yea, let us make amends for our past negligence, by doubling our future diligence. And for our encouragement here, let us remember, that though many things are required of a minister, yet the chief and most indispensable requisites are these two, a passionate desire to save souls, and an unwearied diligence in the pursuit of that noble design. The minister that wants these two qualifications will hardly pass the test, or gain the approbation of God the great judge and trier; but where these are found, they will cover a multitude of other failings and defects. Let us therefore, reverend brethren, (and may I here

conjure both you and myself, by the endeared love we bear to our own souls, and the precious souls committed to our charge, yea by the blood of the Son of God, the price of both,) let us, I beseech you, from henceforth return to our several charges, zealously and industriously plying the great work and business that is before us. Let us think no pains too great to escape that μεῖζον κρίμα, that *greater judgment* that otherwise attends us. Let us study hard, and read much, and pray often, and *preach in season and out of season*, and catechise the youth, and take wise opportunities of instructing those, who being of riper years, may yet be as unripe in knowledge; and visit the sick, and according to our abilities relieve the poor; shewing to all our flock the example of a watchful, holy, humble conversation. And may a great blessing of God crown our labours! Let us go on, and the Lord prosper us.

I have done *ad clerum*, and have but a word more *ad populum*, "to the people."

My brethren, you may possibly think yourselves altogether unconcerned in this whole discourse. But if you do, you are mistaken; all this nearly concerns even you. I shall only point to you wherein.

1. If the pastoral office be so tremendous an undertaking, judge then, I pray you, of the sacrilegious boldness and impiety of those Uzzahs among the laity, that dare touch this ark, the priest's charge and care. If we, my brethren, that have been trained up in the schools of the prophets, that have been educated with no small care and cost to this employment, that have spent a double apprenticeship of years in our studies, and most of us a great deal more: if we, I say, after all this, find reason to

tremble at our insufficiency for such an undertaking, how horrible is the confidence, or rather impudence, of those mechanics, that have leaped from the shop-board or plough into the pulpit, and thus *per saltum*, by a prodigious leap, commenced teachers! What shall we say to these mountebanks in the church, these empirics in theology? I only say this; I can never sufficiently admire, either their boldness in venturing to be teachers, or the childish folly and simplicity of those that give themselves up to be their disciples. It is a miracle that any such person should dare to preach; or if he do, that any man in his right wits should vouchsafe to hear him.

2. This discourse concerning the difficulty and hazard of the priestly office shews sufficiently all the people's danger. It is the danger your own souls are in, my brethren, if not carefully looked to, that is the great hazard of our office. O therefore, if you do consider it, what need have you to look to yourselves!

3. Lastly, If our work and office be attended with this difficulty, sure it is your duty to pity us, to pray for us, to encourage us by all possible ways and means to the vigorous performance of it; at least not to add to our load, or discourage us, either by your wayward factiousness, or stubborn profaneness, or sacrilegious injustice: if you do, sad will be your account.

Remember therefore the advice of the apostle, Heb. xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do this* (i. e. attend on this work of watching over your souls) *with joy, and not with grief*[i]. Gro-

[i] Ἵνα μετὰ χαρᾶς τοῦτο ποιῶσι, καὶ μὴ στενάζοντες.

tius's paraphrase is here most genuine; "Sweeten "and allay the irksome labour of your teachers, by "performing to them all offices of respect and love, "that they may with alacrity, and not with grief, "discharge that function, which is of itself a suffi- "cient burden, without any addition of sorrow from "you [k]."

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, adoration and worship, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

[k] Mulcete eum laborem omnibus obsequiis et officiis, ut cum alacritate potius quam dolore fungantur munere satis gravi, etiamsi a vobis nihil triste accedat.

SERMON VII.

THE DIFFERENT DEGREES OF BLISS AND GLORY IN CHRIST'S HEAVENLY KINGDOM, ANSWER TO THE DIFFERENT DEGREES OF GRACE HERE BELOW. SEVERAL OBJECTIONS AGAINST THIS DOCTRINE ARE ANSWERED.

2 PETER i. 11.

For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

IT is the great concern of every man, in the first place, to get the saving grace of God, and having gotten it, to proceed and increase in it; earnestly to reach after a principle of the divine life within himself, and having attained it, to cherish and improve it; to endeavour of evil (as we are all naturally and antecedently to the divine grace) to become truly good, and then every day to grow better; first to be sincere disciples of the holy Jesus, and then to aspire, study, and labour hard, to become great proficients in his divine school. This latter duty, St. Peter earnestly and vehemently presseth on the converted Jews of the dispersion, to whom he writes, and in them upon all of us, in the verses preceding my text; where he exhorts them in the most emphatical expressions to an holy covetousness after spiritual riches, and to accumulate and heap up heavenly treasures with as much greediness, as the men of this world do their gold and silver: to add one grace

to another, and one degree of each grace upon another, and to abound in virtue and good works. For after he had, ver. 4. minded them of the great design of Christianity, which is to make men *partakers of the divine nature*, by rescuing them from *the corruption that is in the world through lust*, i. e. to convert men from their evil and wicked courses, and to bring them to a state of grace and regeneration; and charitably supposing this to be already done in them, he proceeds to shew them their farther duty, ver. 5, 6, 7, 8. *And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if all these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* As if he had said, You have now, God be thanked, escaped the pollutions of the world, and are truly, I hope, converted to Christianity, and in baptism have been regenerated by the Holy Ghost; (that he means by their being *made partakers of the divine nature.*) This indeed is a very great achievement, and an invaluable mercy of God, vouchsafed to you; yet I beseech you, rest not here; but *besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue*, &c. So that the sum of his discourse is to press them first to truth in grace, and then to growth in grace; to acquire the divine virtues reckoned up by him, and then to abound in them. And to persuade them to this abounding in grace and virtue, he useth a very powerful motive and argument in the words of my

text: *for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* As if he had said, If you thus abound in grace, you shall abound in glory; you shall not only come to heaven, or get just within the gate of that glorious region, (and yet happy is he that can arrive to be but *a door-keeper in the house* of his heavenly Father,) but you shall have an *abundant entrance* into it; you shall go very far, and attain an higher pitch and degree of glory there. This is the plain and obvious sense of the words.

Not to spend time needlessly, or to trouble you with any farther preface, the text thus briefly explained and considered, with relation to the context, readily and of itself offers to us this proposition.

There shall be degrees of bliss and glory in Christ's heavenly kingdom; and the more we abound in grace and good works here, the more abundant shall our reward be hereafter.

This proposition I intend, with the divine assistance, for the theme and subject of my following discourse.

That this is no nice or fruitless speculation, fitted only to exercise the wits of men, or to entertain their curiosity, but a branch *of that truth which is according to godliness*[a], as the apostle Paul expresseth it, Tit. i. 1. that is, a doctrine tending to the advancement and furtherance of piety and virtue amongst men, will be soon evident to any man that with any degree of serious attention shall consider it.

If this be a truth, it must needs be a useful one,

[a] Ἀληθείας τῆς κατ' εὐσέβειαν.

and of concernment to us. And that it is so, will farther appear to all, from those other texts of Scripture, wherein it is not only plainly taught, but also urged as a motive to a more fruitful piety, which shall be produced in the sequel of my discourse; wherein I shall prescribe to myself this plain and easy method.

First, I shall farther prove the proposition by other clear and express texts of Scripture, and by reasons and arguments grounded on Scripture, and by the consent of the catholic church, interpreting the Scripture to the same sense. In the next place, I shall endeavour to answer the principal objections that are usually made against this truth. Lastly, I shall conclude with a brief application of the whole discourse.

First, For the fuller demonstration of the point, let us in the first place hear what the Holy Ghost hath in other places of Scripture delivered concerning it. And here, out of a great abundance of texts that might be alleged, I shall make choice only of such as speak more plainly and evidently to our purpose.

Such is that text in the nineteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel; where, to St. Peter asking what reward he and the rest of the apostles should have, that had forsaken their all in this world to follow Christ, and be his disciples, ver. 27. our Saviour thus answers, ver. 28. *Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* So I read the text. For it is evident enough our translators have mis-

pointed it, referring the words *in the regeneration*, to that which went before, thus; *Ye which have followed me in the regeneration:* whereas they should be joined to the following words, thus: *Ye which have followed me, ἐν τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory,* &c. *In the regeneration;* what is that? Not in baptism, nor in the regeneration or renewing of the Spirit, as some have fancied; for neither of these significations will make good sense in this place; but in the resurrection, which will be indeed a *παλιγγενεσία, a regeneration,* or second generation of men to life, after that life which they had in their first generation was extinguished. Which second generation, or production of men to life, is more properly the work of God, as being effected solely by his divine power, without the concurrence of any second causes; whereas in our first generation into the world our parents were instruments. Hence those words of the Psalmist concerning Christ, Psalm ii. 7. *Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee,* are said by St. Paul to be then fulfilled in him, when God raised him from the dead, Acts xiii. 32, 33. *The promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* And hence also, all the godly are said at the resurrection to become the *children of God, eo nomine,* upon the very account of their being then raised by God to a blessed immortal life, Luke xx. 36. They are called *the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.*

Well then! In or at the regeneration, or resurrection, when Christ shall sit in the throne of his glory, as the Judge of men and angels, it is promised to the twelve apostles, that they *also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Concerning the full sense of which words, though there is some dispute, yet this is generally agreed among interpreters, and it is most evident from the context, that they express some singular and eminent glory, which the apostles should receive in the world to come, as the reward of their singular and eminent self-denial, in devoting themselves to Christ's Gospel. And though every saint shall in his degree be enthroned in the heavenly glory; yet here are twelve thrones of judicature and preeminence, answering to the twelve apostles then in being. Indeed Judas, one of the twelve, afterward fell from his office, and so lost his throne too. But this was through his own default, and our blessed Lord failed not in his promise. But the cursed traitor, by his horrid violation of the condition of it, forfeited his right therein. There being twelve apostles at that time to whom our Saviour spake these words, he saith *they should sit upon twelve thrones;* as if Judas also should have his throne to sit on; not that he thought the wretch should ever attain that throne, (for he knew him from the beginning to be a devil,) but because, if Judas had continued in the faithful discharge of his office, as the other apostles did, he should have had his throne, as the other apostles had theirs, as St. Chrysostom well observes; for Christ speaks of his apostles, *secundum præsentem justitiam,* "according to their

" present righteousness," and not so much of their persons, as of their state and office.

As if he should have said, The office of apostles, as it is an office of the highest service, labour, and difficulty, so it hath the highest reward propounded to it; insomuch that they who well perform it, shall be advanced to the most eminent thrones of glory in the life to come, and be nearest to myself the King of glory. For, to *sit upon thrones, judging* (or governing, or being over) *the twelve tribes of Israel*, is a metaphorical expression, taken (as Grotius well observes upon the place) from the ancient state of the kingdom of Israel, in which οἱ φυλάρχαι *the princes*, or *heads of the tribes*, came nearest in dignity to the king's majesty, and in the public assemblies sat next to the royal throne in chairs of state made of ivory. So that it is manifest, Christ here promiseth his apostles an eminent degree of glory and dignity in his heavenly kingdom. And hence the language is different, which our Saviour useth, concerning the reward of those who should afterwards imitate the apostles, and follow them in their active and passive virtue, though *haud æquis passibus*, " at a very humble distance." For of those in the next verse he saith, that *they should receive an hundredfold*, (a very ample and liberal reward of their self-denial, in whatsoever instance expressed,) *and inherit everlasting life;* but he doth not say, as of the apostles, that they shall *sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

The next place we shall cite will give light to the former, and speaks more clearly to our present purpose. It is to be found in the very next chapter,

the twentieth chapter of the same Gospel of St. Matthew, where we read, ver. 20, 21. that the mother of the sons of Zebedee, James and John, came with her two sons to Christ with this petition, *Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.* She had heard from her sons, that the apostles in general had a promise of a more eminent dignity in Christ's kingdom, like that of the princes or heads of the tribes in the kingdom of Israel, as hath been already noted. But she knew that even among the apostles themselves there would be degrees of dignity; as in the ancient kingdom of Israel, the two first places belonged to the princes of the tribes of Judah and Joseph; these two first places therefore she asks for her two sons in the kingdom of Christ. To sit at the right hand of a king, according to the eastern custom, is the very next place of dignity to the king himself. Hence Solomon sitting on his royal throne commanded his mother to be set on his right hand, 1 Kings ii. 19. consequently the third place of dignity in the kingdom is described by sitting at the king's left hand; for accordingly as any man was greater in the kingdom, so in the public assemblies he sat nearer to the king. To this petition of Salome, our blessed Lord having first by the way given a check to her vanity, and her erroneous opinion about his kingdom, at length, ver. 23. he thus more directly answers, *To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.* Christ speaks as man in the state of humiliation, referring all things of his kingdom (according to his manner) to his Fa-

ther, from whom he received it. But as to our present purpose: our Saviour denies not that there shall be a right-hand and a left-hand place, as a first and second place of dignity, and consequently a third place, and so downwards, in his heavenly kingdom, yea, he plainly asserts, that there shall be such degrees of honour therein; but he only teacheth, that those places and degrees shall be distributed according to the pleasure of his Father, who best knows who are fittest for them; and that this pleasure of God was not yet to be made known, either to Salome and her sons, or to any of the sons of men; but the discovery of it to be reserved to the revelation of the righteous judgment of God at the last day. So that this text very manifestly confirms the proposition; especially if we add the words of our Saviour presently afterwards in the same chapter, spoken upon the same occasion, ver. 26, 27. *Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister: and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.* For hence St. Jerom thus argues against Jovinian, "If we shall be equal in "heaven, we in vain humble ourselves here, that we "may be greater there [b]." Indeed our Saviour in these words most plainly acknowledgeth, that there shall be some greater, some lesser, some first or chief, some inferior in his heavenly kingdom; and he shews that the only way to attain a preeminence hereafter, is by the lowest humility here, and by condescending to the meanest for their spiritual good and advantage.

[b] Si omnes in cœlo æquales futuri sumus, frustra nos hic humiliamus, ut ibi possimus esse majores. Lib. II. contr. Jovin. c. 18.

The same doctrine is plainly taught us (whatever some learned men have fancied to the contrary) from the very scope of the parable of our Saviour, Luke xix. of the ten servants, who received of their lord, being to go into a far country, each of them a pound, to trade with till his return. At which time he that had increased his pound to ten pounds was made *ruler over ten cities*, ver. 16, 17. and he that gained but five pounds was made *ruler over five cities*, ver. 18, 19. the lord's reward bearing proportion to the several improvements made by his servants.

To the same sense and purpose very many of the ancient Fathers, and the most learned modern interpreters, generally expound those words of our Saviour, John xiv. 2. *In my Father's house are many mansions.* The multitude of mansions in heaven seems hardly intelligible, without admitting a difference of degrees in the heavenly glory. For if all the saints should be placed in one and the same degree or station of bliss, they would have all one and the same mansion in heaven; but in our heavenly Father's house there are μοναὶ πολλαὶ *many mansions*, some higher, some lower, according to the measure of proficiency in virtue, which men have attained to in this life. So Clemens Alexandrinus, "There are "with the Lord many rewards and mansions, ac- "cording to the proportion of men's lives [c]." So also Tertullian, "How are there many mansions "with the Father, but according to the variety of "merits [d]?" that is, (in the language of those writ-

[c] Εἰσὶ γὰρ παρὰ Κυρίῳ καὶ μισθοὶ καὶ μοναὶ πλείονες, κατ' ἀναλογίαν βίων. Strom. IV. p. 488. [p. 579. also l. VI. p. 797.]

[d] Quomodo multæ mansiones apud Patrem, si non pro varie-

ers,) the good works of men. So the Fathers of the church afterward alleged this text against Jovinian, who held a parity of rewards in the life to come.

Another common proof of this doctrine is taken out of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xv. 41, 42. *There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.* It is true, in the context of this place, the manifest scope and intent of the apostle is to shew the vast difference between those bodies of ours that die and turn to corruption, and the glorious bodies we shall receive at the resurrection. But yet, in these words it seems plain, that the apostle riseth higher, and by the way sets forth the disparity that there will be at the resurrection, even among the glorified bodies of the saints; some shining with brighter, some with lesser rays of glory: as among the heavenly lights, some are more glorious than others. As if he should have said, There is a difference, not only between the terrestrial and celestial bodies, but even the celestial bodies differ among themselves; the sun being the brightest of the heavenly lights, the moon in its appearance to us the next to it; and among the stars, some being more bright and conspicuous than others. So in the resurrection, not only the glorified bodies of the saints shall differ from their corruptible bodies they had here, but also among those

tate meritorum? *Scorpiace.* [c. 6. also de Monogam. c. 10. Irenæus agrees with this, V. 36. so also Origen, in Num. Hom. I. §. 3. vol. II. p. 277. and in Jesu Naue, Hom. X. p. 422. but in vol. I. p. 106. (de Princip. II. 11. §. 6.) he interprets it of the different heavens through which persons will pass.]

glorified bodies themselves there shall be degrees of glory.

Unless we thus expound the apostle, it will be hard to give a tolerable account of his discourse in this place. For we must otherwise suppose, that he compares those bodies that *are sown in corruption*, the rotten stinking carcasses of men, to some of the glorious heavenly lights, though of a lesser magnitude; than which comparison, what can be more incongruous or absurd! Hence Tertullian in the place, in part already cited, thus understands the text, "How are there many mansions with the Fa-"ther, unless it be according to the variety of men's "good works? How also shall one star differ from "another star in glory, but according to the di-"versity of rays or beams of light[c]?" And as the greatest, so the best part of modern interpreters, acknowledge this exposition of the apostle's words to be true and genuine, yea and absolutely necessary.

But our last text of Scripture will put the matter out of all doubt, which we read 2 Cor. ix. 6. ***But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*** It is certain, and confessed by all, that the design of the apostle in this place is to excite and stir up the Corinthians to a liberal charity towards their distressed brethren, and that his chief argument is contained in these words. It is confessed also, that in these words, *to sow*, signifies to do good works, particularly works of charity; *to reap*, to receive the reward, the future eternal

[c] Quomodo multæ mansiones apud Patrem, si non pro varietate meritorum? Quomodo et stella a stella distabit, nisi pro diversitate radiorum?

reward of such works. Indeed the apostle otherwhere plainly interprets himself to this sense; viz. Gal. vi. 8. *He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.* Where also the latter words manifestly respect in the first place works of charity and beneficence, particularly such as are exercised towards our spiritual teachers, as appears from ver. 6. *Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things.* Now our apostle, in the place alleged out of his Epistle to the Corinthians, expressly asserts, that as our *sowing* is more sparing or more liberal, so shall our *reaping* be also; the greater charity exercised by us in this world, the greater felicity and happiness attends us in the world to come: and so on the contrary, the thinner our seeds of charity are sown here, the lesser will be our harvest of glory hereafter. Nothing can be more express to our purpose than this testimony, and therefore I shall seek after no other or farther proofs from Scripture of the proposition I have undertaken to demonstrate.

But to these direct testimonies of Scripture, I shall only add, by way of overplus, one or two reasons, or arguments grounded on Scripture.

1. It is certain, that amongst the damned there will be an inequality of punishments, some suffering lesser, others greater degrees of torment; therefore it is highly reasonable to think, that in the opposite state of the blessed there will be also a disparity of rewards. The antecedent is determined, and beyond all contradiction asserted, by our Saviour himself. For speaking of the town or city that shall reject the

Gospel preached to them by the apostles, he tells us, that *it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city,* Matt. x. 15. And in the next chapter he assures us, that *it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for Chorazin and Bethsaida,* who had heard his doctrine and seen his miracles, and would be converted by neither of them; and that *it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom,* than for Capernaum, upon the same account, Matt. xi. 20—24. And most express are his words, Luke xii. 47. &c. *And that servant, which knew his master's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

2. There are degrees of honour and glory among the angels in heaven, and though they are all of them glorious creatures, yet among them some are higher, some inferior in dignity, some are greater, others lesser; therefore we have reason to conclude, that there will be an order and gradation among the blessed saints of heaven likewise. For we are sure, that in the future state we shall be like unto the angels; and why not in this? Seeing in the angelical polity there are divers orders, ranks, and degrees, can we imagine that the communion of the saints in heaven shall be a levelled society? This is utterly incredible. Now the antecedent here again

is most evident from Scripture; and though we dare not intrude ourselves into the things we have not seen, or imitate the temerity of that learned and sublime conjecturer Dionysius, who undertakes to reckon up exactly the several orders of the angelical hierarchy, as if he had seen a muster of the heavenly host before his eyes; yet that there are orders and degrees among the blessed angels, we may with all assurance affirm, having the plainest warrant of the holy text for the assertion. For we often read in Scripture, not only of angels, but also of archangels, i. e. chief angels, that have a preeminence above the rest. This is so known and confessed by every man, that we need not cite the texts wherein mention is made of them.

To these reasons we may add the consent of the catholic church in this question. It is certain, that it was ever held in the primitive church as an undoubted truth, that there shall be a disparity of rewards in the life to come; and that this was never called into question, until the conceited opinionist Jovinian, among his other paradoxes, ventured to broach the contrary doctrine. But how he was entertained for this by the most eminent doctors of the church of his age, St. Jerom, St. Austin, and others, we very well know. His obstinacy in this and other erroneous tenets, against the plainest evidence of Scripture and reason, hath placed him in the black catalogue of heretics.

And it is pity that amongst the reformed foreign divines there should be any found that should dare to patronise so exploded an error; especially if we consider the very weak arguments by which they

endeavour to justify their dissent from the catholic church. To the brief examination of which arguments we are in the next place to proceed.

1. They say they cannot conceive how this doctrine can be maintained, without admitting with the papists the merit of good works. For if, as our labour is greater or lesser in God's service here, our reward shall be greater or lesser in the life to come; then there is a proportion observed between our labour or work, and the reward. And this necessarily infers the merit of our work or labour.

I answer, that this objection is founded on a plain mistake of the doctrine of Scripture, which we defend. For when we say with the holy Scriptures, that every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour, we do not mean that there will be an exact proportion between a man's labour and his reward; for it is certain that the highest degree of grace can never equal the lowest degree of glory, nor can the best of saints by all that he can do deserve so much as to be a doorkeeper in the house of his heavenly Father: but the proportion here is between the work and reward of one good man, compared with the work and reward of another; and in this comparison the proportion is exact.

A very learned Father of our church explains this by an apposite similitude, which I shall give you as near as may be in his own words translated. "Sup-"pose," saith he, "three husbandmen to be em-"ployed in cultivating or dressing the field of some "prince, one for one day only, another for three "days, the third for six days. Now if the prince, "out of his royal bounty, shall give to the first a "thousand talents, to the second three thousand ta-

" lents, to the third six thousand; it is evident that " the reward is measured out to each of these ac- " cording to the different measure of their labour: " but yet it were ridiculous for a man hence to con- " clude, that the labour of him that wrought six days " deserved six thousand talents, yea or so much as " six talents, yea or so much as one talent, and so in " the rest. After the same manner are we to con- " ceive of the divine remuneration. For although " we affirm, that God measures out to every man a " different degree of glory, according to the different " measure of his labour; yet it doth not follow from " hence, that between the work and reward of one " and the same man there is an equality of propor- " tion; but only that between the different works " and rewards of different men there is an equality " of proportionality. If therefore the work of any " man be compared with the reward of the same " man, viz. eternal life, we may presently discern an " infinite inequality between them; but if the works " of different men and the rewards of different men " be compared, according to the degrees of eminence " in the same life eternal, there will appear an accu- " rate proportionality. And this is to reward every " man according to his own labour[f]."

I need not say any more in answer to this argument, and shall therefore pass to the next.

2. They thus argue. The future glory of the saints is the purchase of Christ's righteousness, which is alike imputed to all true believers, and they have an equal share therein, and consequently they shall share equally in the future glory.

[f] Davenant de Just. Act. p. 608.

I answer, The doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ, as it hath been too commonly taught and understood, hath been a fruitful mother of many pernicious and dangerous errors in divinity. In this objection, it is supposed, that the righteousness of Christ is so imputed to every believer, that it becomes formally his righteousness, and that upon the sole account thereof he hath a right to the future glory. And if this were true, if Christ's righteousness were thus ours, that righteousness being the most perfect righteousness, nothing less could answer it than the highest reward in heaven; and so indeed it would necessarily follow, that the future glory of all the saints should be alike and equal. But this supposition hath no foundation in Scripture, yea it is plainly false. And that it is so, if we had no other argument, the very doctrine we are now upon were sufficient to evince. We have proved by very plain texts of Scripture, that there will be a disparity of rewards in the life to come, according to the disparity of men's graces and good works in this life; and from hence we may safely conclude, that the doctrine of those who teach that the perfect righteousness of Christ is formally the righteousness of every believer, and that thereupon he hath a right to the highest reward in heaven, is certainly false. Nay indeed, if that doctrine of their's were true, a consequence would follow, which cannot be uttered without trembling, that every saint shall be equal to Christ in glory; Christ's righteousness being his, and so he having a right to whatsoever that righteousness deserved.

But to answer more directly to the objection, there is nothing more certain, than that the future glory of the saints is the purchase of Christ's righteousness.

But how? By the meritorious obedience of Christ, in his life and death, a covenant of grace, mercy, and life eternal was procured, ratified, and established between God and the sinful sons of men; the condition of this covenant is *faith working by love*, or a faith fruitful of good works; and there is also sufficient grace promised to all that shall heartily seek it for the performance of that condition. It is from this covenant of infinite mercy in Christ Jesus alone that our imperfect good works have any ordination to so excellent a reward as the future glory; and it is the mercy, the rich mercy, the royal bounty and liberality of God, expressed in the same covenant, that assigns to greater degrees of grace here, greater degrees of glory hereafter. This is the plain truth. But to be short, and to shew the perfect sophistry of this objection, I ask the objectors, whether they do not acknowledge that the present grace of the saints in this life is as well the purchase of Christ's righteousness, as their future glory? They must, they will, they do confess it. Now then, according to their argument it will follow, that all the saints have equal degrees of grace in this life, because they have an equal share in the righteousness of Christ, by which that grace was purchased; than which assertion nothing can be more notoriously false. This their argument therefore is a manifest fallacy.

3. Their last objection is taken from the parable of our Saviour, Matt. xx. 1. &c. where *the kingdom of heaven*, that is, the church of God, is compared *to a vineyard*, the master whereof went out *in the morning to hire labourers, and agreed with them for a penny a day*. Three hours after, or *at the third hour*, he went out and hired more; and so again

at the sixth and ninth hours; yea *at the eleventh hour* he did likewise. And when they came all to receive their wages, he gave the last he had hired as much as he had agreed for with the first, viz. every one a penny, neither more nor less. Whence they infer that the future reward, signified by this penny, shall not be proportioned according to the difference of men's works, but be one and the same to all.

I answer, this parable belongs not at all to the matter in question, seeing the scope of it is to justify God's proceedings in the dispensation of his grace towards the church of the Jews, and that of the Gentiles; the latter of which was not called till a long time after the former; and though being so much junior to it, yet was made its equal in the benefits and blessings of God's gracious covenant. The Jews were first hired into the vineyard betimes in the morning, in the more early ages of the world, in the days of Abraham, with whom and his posterity God made a special covenant of grace and mercy; and in the after-ages, (which seem to be signified in the parable by the *third,* and *sixth,* and *ninth* hours,) at such times as the true religion was in danger to fail among them, he by extraordinary means and instruments raised and restored it again; as in the days of Moses and Elias, and after the captivity of Babylon. But the Gentiles were not called into the vineyard till the day was far spent, in the last time and dispensation; (undoubtedly signified in the parable by the *eleventh hour;*) and yet these, by the goodness of their heavenly Master, are admitted to the same privileges with the Israelites, and they receive the same reward which was promised to the Jews, with whom

the covenant was first made, and who bore the heat of the day, whilst the others stood idle.

This admission of idolatrous Gentiles, upon their conversion to the faith of Christ, unto equal privileges with the Jews, was a great offence to them, and an occasion of hardening many of them in their unbelief and rejection of Christ's Gospel. They would rather quit, than share in the benefits of the Gospel with the Gentiles, whom they so much despised and hated, as if they scorned to go to heaven in their company. This discontent of the Jews, at the gracious dispensation of God towards the Gentiles, by the Gospel of Christ in the latter ages, is doubtless signified in the parable by the murmuring of those servants that were first hired into the vineyard, against the equal retribution given to those servants that were hired last of all, mentioned ver. 11, 12. And now what is all this to the purpose of the objectors?

In a word, it may seem strange that any man should fetch a proof out of this chapter for a parity of rewards in the life to come, and that from a parabolical discourse delivered therein, and that manifestly designed to a quite different purpose; when in the very same chapter, ver. 23, 26, 27, our Saviour plainly teacheth the contrary doctrine, as I have already undeniably evinced.

The objections against this truth being thus cleared, I shall add only one caution, necessary to prevent the misunderstanding of it, viz. that though there shall be different degrees of glory in the life to come, yet to every saint his own degree shall be a satisfactory beatitude.

To receive those rivers of pleasure, that flow from

the right hand of God, there will be many vessels (if I may use the common similitude) of different sizes and capacities, some greater, some lesser, but all of them shall be filled. This different, but in every one satisfactory perception of the future heavenly bliss, seems to have been typified and represented by the Israelites gathering of manna (that food of heaven) in the wilderness; of which we read, Exod. xvi. 18. that *he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack: they gathered every man according to his own eating.* To explain this as far as we are able, it is to be observed, that although whilst we are in this state of proficiency and running our race, it be not only lawful, but a laudable ambition and emulation in us, to strive to outstrip and excel each other in virtue, and so to gain the richer prize; yet when our race is finished, and the great Βραβευτὴς or Judge of it hath given his award, and passed the decisive sentence, we must not, we shall not contend, but fully acquiesce and rest therein. And then the servant, who having increased his pound but to five more, shall hear his lord thus pronouncing, Εὖ ἀγαθὲ δοῦλε, *Well done thou good servant, be thou ruler over five cities:* he, I say, shall be as well pleased and satisfied as the other servant, who, having made a double improvement, shall receive a proportionable reward, and *have authority over ten cities.*

Among the blessed in heaven there shall be no discontent or repining, no pride or disdain, no grudging or envy; but there shall be all contentment, all joy, all thankfulness, all love. They that are seated in the higher mansions of glory, shall not look down with contempt on those that are beneath them; nor

shall these lift up an envious eye towards the other; but they shall perfectly love and delight in each other: and by an inexpressible union of sublimated charity, each shall make what the other enjoys his own, and all together shall make up in different notes one sweet harmonious concert in the praises of God, the fountain of their bliss. To this purpose is the saying of St. Austin on John xiv. 2. speaking of the different rewards of the blessed in heaven: "It comes "to pass through charity, that what each hath is "common to all; for thus every man hath it also in "himself, when he loves and rejoiceth in, and so en-"joys in another, what himself hath not[g]."

It is hard indeed for us mortals, whilst we dwell in these houses of clay, and are encumbered with the sinful inclinations and passions of this flesh, to conceive of this, and to comprehend the divine power of exalted love. But let us consider, why may not that be among the saints hereafter, which we are sure is among the holy angels now? In that celestial hierarchy, archangels and angels, cherubims and seraphims, and thrones, and the lower orders of those blessed spirits, disagree not among themselves, though they differ from one another in honour and dignity; but on the contrary, they perfectly love and delight in each other, and all in their God. And in their several stations, they readily and cheerfully execute the will and pleasure of their great Lord and Master, whose ministers they are; and all together make one family of love and peace, of joy and order, and one harmonious choir, in perfect concert, and with ravish-

[g] Fit quidem per charitatem, ut quod habent singuli, commune sit omnibus: sic enim quisque etiam ipse habet, cum amat in altero quod ipse non habet.

ing melody, sounding forth the praises of their heavenly King. And thus it shall be with the saints after the resurrection, when they shall be made ἰσάγγελοι, *like unto the angels*, i. e. when they shall enjoy the same life immortal which the angels do, and be joined to them, and incorporated into their blessed society.

And now, lastly, to apply this whole discourse: Let us, by what hath been said, be excited and stirred up to a diligent, earnest, and zealous pursuit after an increase of virtue, and a greater proficiency in the ways of righteousness and holiness. Let us shun no labour that comes in our way, and is within our reach and compass, whereby we may glorify God, and do good to others; for we see, the more grace the more glory; and the greater and more industrious our labour in God's service hath been in this life, the greater and more copious and abundant shall our reward be in the life to come. We cannot be truly righteous overmuch, as the slothful world would persuade us, nor can there be any excess or superfluity in virtue, or in the habits and exercises of real piety and charity. How great soever our labour be in the business of religion, none of it shall be lost labour, or *in vain in the Lord.* Every degree of grace which we advance to here, shall raise us a degree higher in the future glory. And all the good works that ever we do, shall be recorded in the faithful register of the divine Omniscience, and not one of them shall be forgotten, or miss of its reward. Oh! that this consideration might often and very deeply enter our thoughts! How would a vigorous sense of this truth awaken and rouse us out of our remissness and negligence in religion, that too often seizeth on us! How

would this inspirit and animate us to generous attempts even of heroic virtue, which in this degenerate age are derided, as vain romantic enterprises! How often at least would this thought call us from our idle solitude or unprofitable society, to our prayers and devotions! How many precious hours of our time would it rescue and redeem, from being misspent and lost in vanity and folly! How readily should we embrace, yea, how studiously should we seek after the opportunities of doing good! for indeed every such opportunity is an advantage offered us by the good providence of God, farther to enrich our souls, and to add to our heavenly store and treasure, the only true treasure, that shall never fail or be taken from us.

In a word, therefore, let us in the first place (as I said in the beginning of this discourse) take care to secure our being in a state of grace; for "it is a folly for him, that is not yet sure of life, to "contend for honour[h]." And having done this, let us not rest here, but advance more and more in that blessed state, and go on to perfection.

I conclude with the words of St. Peter in the close of this Epistle, *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and for ever. Amen.*

[h] Incertis de salute, de gloria minime certandum.

SERMON VIII.

EVERLASTING LIFE HOPED FOR BY GOOD MEN UNDER THE OLD TESTAMENT; AND THAT THE CONSIDERATION OF THE VANITY OF THE PRESENT LIFE IS AN EFFECTUAL MEANS TO MAKE US FIX OUR MINDS UPON THINGS ETERNAL.

PSALM ciii. 15, 16, 17.

As for man, his days are as grass: as the flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him.

THIS Psalm (confessed by all to be a Psalm of David) is eucharistical throughout: it begins and ends with the most devout and affectionate praises and thanksgivings to Almighty God. For thus the sweet singer of Israel begins the Psalm, ver. 1, 2. *Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.* And thus he ends the Psalm, ver. 20, 21, 22. *Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul.*

The matter of this praise and thanksgiving, contained in the body of the Psalm, is of a very large

and wide compass, extending itself to all the benefits bestowed by God upon man. But the divine Psalmist more particularly takes notice of two principal blessings of God, belonging to the faithful, (which are indeed the matter of two great articles of our Christian faith,) " the forgiveness of sin," and " the " life everlasting." The mercy of the forgiveness of sin he celebrates verse 3. *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases.* And again, in the eighth and following verses, *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.* The blessing of everlasting life, after this present vain life, he sets forth in the verses which I have chosen for my text.

In which the royal Psalmist suggests to us a twofold meditation. 1. Of the vanity and shortness of this present life, and all the enjoyments thereof: *As for man, his days are as grass: as the flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof knoweth it no more.* 2. Of the everlasting mercy of God to the faithful in the other life: *But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.* For the everlasting

mercy of God here spoken of, being opposed to the short transitory enjoyments of this present life, must necessarily signify the mercy and goodness of God to the faithful in the other life, which indeed is the only everlasting mercy. Hence Aben Ezra, and other of the Hebrew doctors, saw and acknowledged that this text speaks of the everlasting happiness of the righteous in the life to come. And the Chaldee paraphrast thus renders the latter part of my text: "But the mercy of the Lord is in this world, and "even in the world to come, upon them that fear "him [a]."

The text thus briefly explained, yields us these two observations, which shall be the subject of my discourse at this time. 1. That good men, even under the Law, or Old Testament, looked beyond this present, vain, transitory life, and believed and hoped for an everlasting happiness in the life to come. 2. That a serious consideration of the vanity and shortness of this present life, and all the enjoyments thereof, is an effectual means to bring us to God, and to make us fix our hopes on him and things eternal.

1. That good men, even under the Law, or Old Testament, looked beyond this present, vain, transitory life, and believed and hoped for an everlasting happiness in the life to come. For such a faith and hope, you see, David plainly expresseth in this text, and the same he often otherwhere declares in this divine Book of Psalms. Indeed in all those places, wherein he shews the vanity and shortness of this life, and that there is no solid, substantial, and stable

[a] מִן עָלְמָא וְעַד עָלְמָא דְּאָתֵי עַל דַּחֲלוֹי

happiness to be found here below; and yet, with the same breath, sets forth the great happiness of the faithful, in their trust and dependence on God's goodness and mercy; I say, in all those places he evidently points his finger towards heaven, and directs our thoughts to the bliss and happiness of a future state. You may especially find it in Psalm xxxix. 5, 6, 7. *Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.*

To the same purpose are those Psalms of David, wherein he amply describes the prosperous and flourishing estate of many wicked men; and on the other side, the calamitous and afflicted condition of many good and virtuous in this world; and yet in the close pronounceth these to be most happy men, and the other to be most miserable; which cannot be true, but on supposition of a future state and resurrection. Of this sort are the forty-ninth and seventy-third Psalms throughout,

But what need we search far into the Book of Psalms? The very first Psalm affords us a clear proof of this truth. For therein David first shews the blessedness of the godly man in the first and following verses: *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night,* &c.

And then, on the contrary, he declares the miserable condition of the ungodly, ver. 4, 5, *The ungodly are not so:* (i. e. they are not blessed as the righteous, but are indeed very miserable men:) *they are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore,* or because, *the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*

Now what judgment or tribunal of God is that, to which all the ungodly shall be cited, in which none of them shall be able to stand? i. e. to carry their cause, but they shall all, *causa cadere,* "be cast, and "utterly overthrown?" Certainly this cannot be understood of any judgment of God exercised in this life. For here wicked men often prosper, and go out of the world without any discernible mark of God's judgment on them. And on the other side, many good men, as to the things of this world, are cast and overthrown, ruined and undone. David therefore undoubtedly speaks of a *judgment to come.* And accordingly the author of the Targum, or Chaldee Paraphrase, thus renders the words, "The ungodly shall "not be justified in the great day[b]." The great day, i. e. the day of the last judgment, the day of the great assize, wherein all men shall receive their final doom and sentence, called by St. Peter *the day of the Lord,* 2 Peter iii. 10. Again, what is that *congregation of the righteous,* wherein *no sinner shall appear?* Surely there neither is, nor ever was, nor ever will be, any such unmixed company of righteous men to be found in this world. Here the chaff and the wheat, the good and bad, are mingled together; but

[b] לָא יִזְכּוּן רְשִׁיעֵי בְיוֹמָא רַבָּא

a winnowing time of judgment will come, wherein *the wicked shall be as the chaff which the wind driveth away,* (as the Psalmist expresseth it,) and nothing but the pure and clean wheat shall remain and be laid up in God's granary. There shall then (as our Saviour assures us) be a congregation or gathering together, from one end of the heavens to the other, of all God's elect, who have been from the beginning of the world; which being placed at the right hand of the Judge, shall receive that joyful sentence, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* In this congregation of the righteous no sinner shall be found: the ungodly shall be placed altogether in another herd, at the Judge's left hand, and hear that dreadful sentence, *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.* This is the clear sense of those words of the Psalmist, *The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.* And by these texts it is evident, that David believed a future state and a judgment to come.

Nor was this faith peculiar to David, but a received notion among the Jews, in the time and age wherein David lived. For it appears that the Jews then generally believed the immortality and subsistence of the soul of man after the death of the body, and consequently a future state of happiness or misery, according to the works and actions of men in this life respectively. This, I say, appears (if we had no other evidence of it) from the history of Saul, desiring to consult the prophet Samuel after he was dead, 1 Sam.

xxviii. the eleventh and following verses. For that history (which way soever you determine the old dispute, whether it was indeed the soul of Samuel that gave him answer, or an evil spirit personating the holy prophet) undeniably proves that Saul (as little true religion as he had, yet) believed that the soul of Samuel was still in being, and alive, after his body was dead and laid in the grave; from whence it is plain, that the doctrine of the soul's immortality was no news to the men of that age.

In the writings of king Solomon, the son of David, we find some very clear declarations of the immortality of man's soul, and of a future state. Such is that in the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes, ver. 7. *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*[c]. The plain and evident sense of which words is this: Whereas man consists of two parts, body and soul, the condition of these two when he dies will be very different: for the body being first taken out of the dust of the earth, and so of a corruptible constitution, shall go back into the earth again, and moulder into dust; but the soul, as it is of another and more noble original, (as being at first breathed immediately from God himself into the body,) shall not perish with the body, but return to God and the regions above. For Solomon seems to speak of the end of man, according to God's primary and antecedent will and intention; which was, *that the soul of man after death should go to God and the heavenly beings;* and not of the consequent event of things happening through men's sin and wickedness; whereby it comes

[c] [See note at p. 29.]

to pass, that the souls of many men, when they die, go to the Devil and the infernal regions. Though it is true also, that the spirit of every man after death, good or bad, in some sense goes to God, and returns into his hands, to be kept somewhere under the custody of his almighty power, in order to the receiving of his final sentence at the last judgment, either of life or death eternal. And accordingly the Wise Man, a little after in the same chapter, subjoins the article of the future universal judgment, and that as an argument to persuade men, not to acquiesce in these worldly vanities, but to make religion and the service of God their chief design and business; ver. 13, 14. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole* [duty] *of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* This was Solomon's faith.

Let us proceed to the following ages. After these times it pleased the good and gracious God, to afford his people a mighty and most convincing evidence of the future heavenly and immortal life in the translation of Elias, of which you read, 2 Kings ii. 11, 12. that he was taken up by God in *a fiery chariot into heaven,* and that in the sight of Elisha, who afterwards saw him no more. And this was left upon record, so that none of the Jews who read the history could be ignorant of this wonderful work of God.

In the writings of the succeeding prophets, there are many passages, which an equal and unprejudiced reader cannot but believe have a prospect to the life to come. But because they are liable to some cavils and exceptions, (occasioned by the obscurity of the

prophetic style,) which I have not now time to consider, I shall at present wave them, and proceed to some other instances.

In the time of the captivity lived the penman of the 102d Psalm, as clearly appears from the thirteenth and following verses; and he is thought by some learned interpreters to have been Nehemiah. But whoever was the writer of the Psalm, we have therein a very remarkable passage to our purpose in the twenty-fifth and following verses: *Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.* Here it is most plainly asserted, that as the heavens and the earth were at first created and made by the almighty power of God, so by the same power they shall one day, as to their present constitution, perish and be dissolved; and that a change or new state of things shall ensue.

Now what is this, I beseech you, but the very doctrine of St. Peter concerning the last day of judgment, 2 Peter iii. 10. and 13. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* Certainly the end or dissolution of this present world, and a future state or world to come, have a necessary connection one with the other, and are both alike matters of divine revelation. Nor can it be imagined why, and to what purpose, the

former should be revealed to the sons of men without the latter. But besides, as I have already noted, the words of the Psalmist expressly speak of a change of things at the end and dissolution of this present world; such a change, as when a man puts off, folds up, and lays aside an old garment, and puts on a new and fresh one.

I shall only farther remark here, that the ancient oracles attributed to the Sibyls, extant before our Saviour's time, (which in great part had their original from the Jewish theology,) spake also of the last great conflagration, or dissolution of this present world. For so Ovid testifieth,

> Esse quoque in fatis reminiscitur affore tempus,
> Quo mare, quo tellus, correptaque regia cœli
> Ardeat, et mundi moles operosa laboret. [MET. I. 256.]

That in them there was mention of a time appointed by the divine decree, wherein heaven and earth should be all on fire, and the vast fabric of this world should sink in the flames thereof.

My next instance shall be taken from the book entitled, The Wisdom of Solomon; which though it be not canonical, is yet an ancient and venerable writing, undoubtedly extant before our Saviour's time, and is a competent and sufficient witness of the faith and belief of the church in the time wherein it was written. In the second chapter of that book, from the first to the twentieth verse inclusively, the author elegantly represents the base and vile sentiments of ungodly infidels concerning the life to come. And then in the four last verses of the same chapter, and the four first verses of the following chapter, against that wicked doctrine, he opposeth the catholic truth, received and believed by the church of God in his time, in these

words: *Such things they did imagine, and were deceived: for their own wickedness hath blinded them. As for the mysteries of God, they knew them not: neither hoped they for the wages of the righteous: nor discerned a reward for blameless souls. For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity. Nevertheless through envy of the Devil came death into the world: and they that hold of his side do find it. But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die: and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction: but they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality.*

My last instance shall be in those Old Testament martyrs, that matchless woman and her seven sons, who, for adhering to the law of God, suffered under the impious merciless tyrant Antiochus; whose history you may read in the seventh chapter of the second book of Maccabees. What exquisite torments did they suffer with the greatest courage, in hope of a blessed resurrection, which they all openly professed to the face of the tyrant! How did they scorn the offer of life and honour too, upon their compliance with the sinful terms proposed to them! But the words of the last of the seven sons, speaking of his brethren that died before him, are express, and most remarkable, ver. 36. *Our brethren, which now have suffered a short pain, are dead under God's covenant of everlasting life.* I scarce know where to find an instance of greater faith and fortitude in any of our Christian martyrologies. And as to the

truth of the history, it was never questioned in the Jewish church, as appears from Josephus and their other writers. And it is moreover confirmed by the divine author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who manifestly refers to it, chap. xi. 35. where, discoursing of the faith and patience of the saints before Christ, he mentions some *who were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might receive a better resurrection.*

By these testimonies and instances it sufficiently appears, that good men under the law did not live and die like swine, feeding only on the husks of these earthly vanities, as some have foolishly imagined. They had undoubtedly a future state in their eye, and lived by the faith of it, as well as we. This faith was first derived, not from the law of Moses, (for that in the letter of it promised nothing beyond this life,) but from the gracious revelation of God to mankind from the beginning. For the clearing whereof we are to remember, what the author of the Book of Wisdom in the place before cited tells us, and the church of God always believed, viz. that *God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity;* and that *through the envy of the Devil death entered into the world,* Wisdom, chap. ii. 23, 24. That is, that our first parents in paradise were designed to a life immortal, if they had not sinned. And indeed in the history of Genesis we expressly read, that they were forbidden only *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,* being freely allowed to eat of all the other trees, *the tree of life* not excepted. Which doubtless was so called, because it was either a symbol and sacrament, or an instrument or means of immortality, or

both. And we there read also, that *death was threatened to our first parents, as a punishment to them if they should transgress the command of God given them.* Which evidently implies, that if they had not sinned, they should not have died. Indeed, how could they understand the sanction otherwise, and what force could it have had on them to deter them from sinning, if they had thought they should have died, whether they had sinned or not? And therefore St. Paul expressly teacheth us, *that by the sin of the first man* (and no otherwise) *death entered into the world,* in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and in other places.

By his sin then Adam lost paradise, and that whereof it was a figure, heaven too. He was debarred from the sacrament of immortality, the sentence of death being passed upon him. But was he utterly left in this sad estate, without hope of recovery? The church of God hath always believed that he repented, and laid hold on the mercy of a second covenant, and was received again into divine favour; although there be no express mention of this in his history. Thus, we do not read of any precept or law given by God to Adam after his fall, but we find the practice of sacrificing in his family. And it will be very difficult to him that considers the matter thoroughly, to imagine that he invented that rite of his own head; he was taught it therefore by the command and institution of God. And it is highly reasonable to think, that at the same time, when God gave a second law and institution, he encouraged him also to the obedience of it, by a promise of acceptance and restitution to his former favour. Upon this hope doubtless he renewed his

allegiance to his Creator, and devoted himself to the worship and service of God, and taught his sons, Cain and Abel, to do so likewise. From him they learned to present their several offerings to the Lord, Gen. iv. where we read also, ver. 4, 5. that *God had respect to Abel's offering*, and declared his acceptance of it by some visible sign, taken notice of by his brother Cain; probably, as the Hebrew doctors tell us, "by a fire from heaven, in-"flaming his offering." But how was Abel's offering accepted by God? Surely not to the obtaining of any of the temporal blessings or good things of this life; for, on the contrary, for this very sacrifice which he offered to God, he soon became himself a sacrifice to the envy and malice of his wicked brother. Abel therefore, and his offering were accepted by God to the purposes of salvation, and the obtaining of the good things of the life to come. And as he was the first martyr for righteousness sake, that is, upon the account that he was more righteous than his brother; so he was the first saint that entered the heavenly paradise.

Moreover, it is certain that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, spake of a life to come and a future judgment. For St. Jude assures us, ver. 14, 15. of his Epistle, that he expressly prophesied, that *God should come with ten thousand of his saints,* or angels, *to judge all that are ungodly.* And the same Enoch, as he was a preacher of the life to come, so he was an illustrious precedent or example thereof. For we read, Gen. v. 24. that *Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him;* i. e. God took him out of this world, to the happiness above, to the bliss of paradise. And the

author of Ecclesiasticus, chap. xliv. 16. tells us, that *Enoch pleased God, and was translated, being an example of repentance to future generations.* What God did to Enoch was exemplary, and taught all future generations what they might expect from God, if they walked with him as Enoch did. So that the translation of Enoch to heaven was a seal and confirmation of the doctrine of a life to come, which he had preached to men while he was here on earth.

St. Paul seems plainly to confirm all that hath been said in his Epistle to Titus, chap. i. 2. where he tells us that *eternal life was promised by God that cannot lie,* πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων, that is, (not *before the foundation of the world,* as our translators render it[d], for there were then no men to whom such promise might be made, but) *before ancient times,* as the words will bear, or from the beginning of the world. This promise was made to Adam in paradise; this promise was renewed to mankind presently after the fall; it was believed by Adam and his sons; it was preached, published, yea and exemplified by Enoch. By the faith of this promise, the patriarchs did and suffered great things, as the divine author of the Epistle to the Hebrews excellently reasons, chap. xi. This promise continued in force under the law, and was not made of no effect by it; and this same promise is now most fully revealed, ratified, established, and confirmed to us by the Gospel of Christ.

In a word, the doctrine of a future life and judgment continued inviolate and unquestioned among

[d] [This is a mistake: our translation has "*before the world* "*began.*"]

the Jews till after their return from the captivity. After which time (exactly how soon, or how long after, seems to me uncertain) there arose the heresy of the Sadducees, who believed neither the immortality of the soul, nor the resurrection of the body, nor the judgment to come. But concerning these Josephus observes [e], that "though they were generally rich "and great men," (their principles leading them to mind and seek after the riches and honours of this world,) "yet they were very few in number, com- "pared to the rest of the Jews." And accordingly we read, that when our blessed Lord had refuted their wicked doctrine out of the Pentateuch, or books of Moses, which they themselves acknowledged, the multitude, as adhering to the old catholic faith, applauded his discourse, Matt. xxii. 33. The same Josephus also tells us, "that when any of "the Sadducees were admitted to offices of public "trust and government, they were forced to dissem- "ble their faith, or rather infidelity, and to subscribe "to the received doctrine of the church of the Jews, "because otherwise the people would by no means "have endured them."

I shall only by the way farther add, what divers Hebrew writers of good note have related as a certain and known truth, that several of that impious sect, being gotten into the pontifical office, when they were about to enter the sanctuary, were, like Nadab and Abihu, smitten by the hand of God, a flame of fire issuing forth from between the cherubims, that covered the ark, and destroying them upon the spot. A just and suitable judgment upon

[e] Antiq. Judaicæ, XVIII. 2.

those profane wretches, who durst approach that type of heaven, whilst in their hearts they derided the antitype, believing no other heaven but what is here on earth, and scoffing at the resurrection and future judgment, without the belief whereof, there can be no serious and hearty worship or service of God.

And thus, I hope, I have sufficiently cleared and confirmed my first observation from the text, that good men, under the Law or Old Testament, looked beyond this present vain and transitory life, and believed and hoped for an everlasting happiness in the life to come.

Now this discourse serves to confirm the truth of the Christian religion, and our belief of it. The great promise of the Gospel is of a happy life hereafter to them that live virtuously here. That this promise is not delusory, no new fiction, or vain suggestion of Christ and his apostles, is sufficiently evident from the suffrage of the church of God before our Saviour's time, and from the beginning. We may say of this promise of a future life, as St. John doth of the evangelical precept of love, that it is a new commandment, and yet no new one, but an old one, delivered from the beginning; 1 John ii. the 7th and following verses. So this promise of a future happiness to the righteous, the chief part of that good tidings which the Gospel brings us, is a new promise, and yet not new, but an old one. New it is in respect of its clearer discovery and fuller confirmation by Christ; and yet not new, because this promise was given from the beginning, and good men in the church of God had always the same kind of hope that we have. In the church of God,

did I say? Nay, there is no people so barbarous but have had some notion of a life to come, this divine revelation being delivered from the beginning, preserved till the flood, and after the dispersion of the sons of Noah, conveyed by them to the several nations descending from them; though the doctrine (as all things intrusted to mere tradition used to be) was corrupted in the conveyance.

When therefore we Christians deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, out of an hope to be rewarded in a state remaining after this life, we venture in the same bottom that all good men of all nations have done before us. But God be thanked, if this notion had never been heard of in the world before our Saviour's coming, yet he alone hath brought with him such an assurance of it, that there remains no place of doubting to any reasonable and unprejudiced person; even by his own most glorious resurrection and ascension, abundantly attested to us, by the constant sufferings of the many eyewitnesses thereof, upon the account of that very testimony; and by very many unparalleled miracles wrought by them and their successors a long time after them; whereby indeed the whole Gospel of Christ is clearly evidenced. I conclude this with St. Paul's exhortation, 1 Cor. xv. 58. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

And so I pass to the other observation from my text, which I shall despatch in a word or two, and so conclude.

2. That a serious consideration of the vanity and

shortness of this present life, and all the enjoyments thereof, is an effectual means to bring us to God, and to make us fix our hopes on him and things eternal.

For thus it wrought with David here, who after he had considered the vanity of this world in these words, *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. The wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more;* he presently directs his thoughts to heaven in the following words, *But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.*

If therefore we would have our hearts brought off to God, and the serious pursuit of eternal things, let us daily study the vanity of this world. Study it, did I say? There seems little need of study, or deep search into this matter. This is a thing that thrusts itself upon our thoughts, so that we must think of it, unless we thrust it from us.

This lesson of the world's vanity, divine Providence doth press and inculcate on us, and as it were beat into us. We daily see the vicissitudes of human affairs. We continually hear of the losses, troubles, or calamities of friends or strangers. Yea, ever and anon some cross accident or other befalls ourselves, to let us know, that our happiness lies not here. We are daily accosted with spectacles of mortality, and, as our church expresseth it, "in the midst of life "we are in death." Alas! that in the midst of so many remembrancers wherewith Providence hath surrounded us, we should, with the monarch in story, need another monitor to tell us every day, "Re- "member that thou art mortal!" And yet this is our

case. What fatal stupidity is it that hath seized on us? Hath the frequency of these admonitions made them to lose their force and virtue on us? or rather, are we affectedly ignorant, and do we wilfully put the evil day far from us? Whatever the cause be, the effect is sadly visible.

The time will shortly come, when we shall all perfectly understand (if we have any understanding left in us) the vanity of this world, when perhaps it will be too late for us to be the better for that knowledge, too late to mend our fortunes, (if I may so speak,) or to secure ourselves a happier condition in another world: I mean, when the world shall take its leave of us and we of it, when we come to die. Then the worldling himself shall be out of love with this world, yea, perfectly hate it, and be angry and vexed to find himself so miserably deluded and cheated by it. When all his treasures shall not be able to redeem his life from death; when all his vain and sinful delights and pleasures shall utterly forsake him, and leave nothing behind but a bitter remembrance of them; when pain, anguish, and sorrow shall take hold of him; when his soft bed shall give him no ease, nor his luxurious table afford him one morsel of food or sustenance; when his friends (if he have any) shall stand weeping about him, but not be able to help him; when his very life and breath shall begin to fail him, especially when (if his conscience be awakened) he shall see that dismal state of things that expects him in the other world, *an angry and an almighty God too, bending his bow,* (as the Psalmist elegantly describes it, Psalm vii. 12, 13.) *and making ready his arrows, and whetting his glittering sword of vengeance*

against him: those bailiffs of the divine justice, the devils, waiting to arrest his soul, and carry it to that prison from whence there is no redemption; and, in a word, hell itself opening her mouth wide to devour him. Then, then he will acknowledge that to be most true, which he had been often told before by the wise, but would not be convinced of it, that to trust to any thing in this world is a perfect folly, to neglect God and eternal things a very madness, and that religion and the fear of God is the only true wisdom. Then he will confess, that one spark of true virtue and grace in the heart, one soft whisper of a good conscience, one glimpse of the light of God's countenance, is more to be valued than this whole world.

But it were to be wished we would understand the vanity of this world at a cheaper rate, and as becomes wise men, by foresight and consideration, and not learn it only from that mistress of fools, sad experience. Yea, let us anticipate and be beforehand with this perfidious world, by breaking off our league with it before it thus miserably disappoints us. Let us now, presently, (if we have not before done it,) entirely devote and give up ourselves to the service of God, and the serious pursuit of eternal things. Let us renew our baptismal vow, and once again in good earnest renounce the world, with all its vanities. And let us do this seasonably, and in due time, whilst we may be accepted of God, whilst we are in such circumstances, that our abandoning the vanities of this world, and the devotion of our hearts and affections to God and heavenly things, may be accounted a free-will offering, and not be a matter of mere constraint and necessity. For *let us*

not deceive ourselves, God is not mocked, he will not accept of the world's leavings.

The ever-blessed God, the fountain of all happiness, the chief good of man, the most excellent and desirable Being, out of his infinite grace and goodness, from time to time calls upon us in the ministry of his word, and by his providence, to take off our hearts from the things of this world, and offers himself to our acceptance, and even courts us (O, infinite condescension!) to be happy, for ever happy, in the enjoyment of him. Now, if after all this, we still cleave to the lusts and vanities of this world, and prefer them before God the Creator, blessed for ever, and that even to the last, till death is just ready to hale us off from the world, and we can enjoy it no longer; how can we expect, or so much as imagine, that God will bear this affront at our hands, this vile contempt of his most glorious majesty, or ever receive us into his grace and favour?

Let us therefore now, in the day of our health and prosperity, in the midst of the enjoyments of this life, whilst the world smiles on us, and tempts us with its alluring vanities, take off our hearts from it, despise it, and live above it, and heartily choose God for our portion, and *set our affections on the things which are above.* And then we may be secure, we may depend upon it, that in the day of our distress, even in the hour of death, God will be our God, to stand by us, and to support and comfort us. And the light of his countenance shall make even *the valley of the shadow of death* bright and lightsome to us. And after death, we shall be received into those regions of bliss, where we shall see and enjoy things *that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nei-*

ther hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. To which blessed state God of his infinite mercy bring us all in his due time, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, adoration and worship, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON IX.[a]

WHAT THAT WORTHINESS IS, AND WHEREIN IT CONSISTS, WHICH IS REQUIRED OF THOSE THAT SHALL BE PARTAKERS OF THE FUTURE HEAVENLY GLORY.

REV. iii. 4.

And they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

THE whole verse runs thus: *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.*

My text is part of the epistle or letter of our blessed Saviour dictated to and sent by St. John, his apostle, to the angel or bishop of the church of Sardis. Wherein our Lord severely reprimands that bishop (and, as it appears, the generality of the church under his government) for great corruptions, both in doctrine and manners, which they were guilty of, ver. 1, 2, 3. But in the verse out of which my text is taken, our Saviour takes notice of some few in that very church, who had kept themselves pure and free from the general and prevailing corruptions of it: *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments.* A few names, i. e. a few persons; so the word ὀνόματα,

[a] [From a passage in this Sermon concerning the prospect of persecution being removed, it would seem to have been written not long after 1688.]

names, is used Acts i. 15. and in other places of Scripture.

In the greatest corruptions of the church, God's grace always reserves some few that retain their integrity. Thus in Isaiah's time, when the people of the Jews were generally become so vile, that the prophet, speaking to them and their magistrates, calls them *rulers over Sodom and people of Gomorrah*; yet even then God had left to himself a small remnant of good men, for whose sake the city of Jerusalem, though as wicked as Sodom, was not destroyed as Sodom was, with a final and utter destruction, Isai. i. 9, 10. When the church of the Jews was so overwhelmed with idolatry, that good Elias thought himself the only man that stuck to the worship and service of the true God; yet even then the Lord could tell him, *Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him*, 1 Kings xix. 18. In that exceeding numerous and populous nation, there were but seven thousand that adhered to the God of their fathers, just so many, and not one more. In general corruptions, when those few good men that are left are hid, and seem as it were to be lost and swallowed up in the vast multitude of the wicked; yet even then, the all-seeing eye of God finds them out, and not a man of them escapes his gracious and favourable notice; and as the expression of our Lord, concerning those few good men in the degenerate church of Sardis, imports, he knows them all by name, *Thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments.* Those names the Lord so knew and took notice of, as to write them

in his book of life, for so it follows in the text: *And they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.*

They shall walk with me ἐν λευκοῖς, *in white,* or bright, *garments.* As they walked before me in the pure and clean garments of sanctity and holiness in this life, so shall they walk with me in bright garments of glory in the life to come. *Thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white.* It is a metaphorical expression frequently used in this book of the Revelation, to set forth the heavenly glory, which the saints shall be partakers of in the future state. So, to look no farther, it is used in the verse next to my text, ver. 5. *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*

This is the promise of our Saviour to the good men of the church of Sardis, and in them to all sincere and faithful Christians. The reason of the promise follows in the next words of my text, ὅτι ἄξιοί εἰσι, *for they are worthy.* And upon this part of the text I shall insist in my following discourse.

For they are worthy. Let no man startle at the expression, for to be sure there is no hurt in it, it being the language of the Holy Ghost; and when we have thoroughly inquired into it, it will be found pregnant of matter, tending very much both to the glory of God, and the instruction, yea, and comfort too, of all sincere Christians. In the mean time, from the plain words of the text, we may venture to lay down this proposition as an undoubted truth:

There is a certain worthiness required in those, that shall be partakers of the future heavenly glory.

The text is express, and there are many other places of Scripture that speak as expressly to the same purpose. So again our Saviour himself, Luke xx. 35. οἱ καταξιωθέντες, *They who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage.* And chap. xxi. 36. *Watch ye therefore, and pray,* ἵνα καταξιωθῆτε, *that ye may be accounted worthy to escape these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.* So 2 Thess. i. 5. *That ye may be accounted worthy of the kingdom of God.* Where the Greek word is the same as in the former texts. From these testimonies of Scripture, (to which divers others might be added,) it is evident, that there is a certain worthiness required in those, that shall be partakers of the heavenly glory. Now my business at present shall be carefully to inquire, what this worthiness is, and wherein it consists.

1. And first negatively, It is not, cannot be a worthiness of condignity or proper merit, that is meant, as the doctors of the church of Rome generally understand by the texts alleged.

Some of these men have not trembled to affirm, that their good works are worthy of the heavenly glory, in strict justice, without any respect at all to the covenant and promise of God. Others of them assert, that the good works of the regenerate, being performed by the assistance of the divine Spirit, bear a just proportion to the heavenly glory; and need the promise of God to make them deserve it only

upon this account, because God is not bound to accept our good works to eternal life, though they be commensurate, and in value equal thereunto, unless he bind himself by agreement so to do: just as a man is not bound to part with a piece of land of his own to another, that offers him a full price for it, unless by his consent he makes it a bargain; which is the general opinion of the Romanists, and which Bellarmin[b] maintains, as undoubtedly agreeable to the decree of the council of Trent.

This is a horrid doctrine, and not to be endured in the church of Christ. Such a worthiness of condignity, and proper merit of the heavenly glory, cannot be found in any the best, most perfect, and excellent of created beings, much less in any of the sons of fallen and sinful man. For what is the worthiness, what are the good works of the best of us? Works imperfectly good, mixed with human frailty and infirmity in the doing of them; interrupted with sins of daily incursion, so that even they who can call God their Father, are in the Lord's Prayer taught every day to pray for the *forgiveness of their trespasses*, as duly as they pray for their *daily bread*. And then they are the works (suppose them never so perfect) of a very short life here on earth, and that generally of a little scantling of that short life; most of us having sinned, or trifled away the best and greatest part of our life, before we had well learned the art of living well; and in that part of our lives committed such sins, as all our after-piety, were it far greater than it is, can never of itself sufficiently expiate. And after all this, we are be-

[b] De Justif. V. 17. [vol. IV. ed. 1608.]

holden for all the good which we do, to the free grace of God exciting us to do it, and assisting us and our endeavours in the doing of it; so that our good works are the gifts and graces of God. Well, this is our worthiness, these are our good works.

Now what is that future glory and happiness we profess to hope for? An astonishing happiness, no less than the vision and everlasting fruition of God himself, blessed for ever. And is it possible for any man, yea, any angel or created being, by any thing that he can do, to merit such a glory as this? Is it possible for the creature to deserve the Creator, and the everlasting possession and enjoyment of him? Certainly no; nothing but the infinite goodness and condescension of God the Creator can be assigned as the cause or reason, why any the best of creatures should be advanced to such an amazing felicity and happiness. And as for us sinful men, we having by our sins put a bar to the divine goodness, nothing could (or at least God had for very good reasons decreed that nothing should) remove that bar, and make way for the free current of his heavenly bounty to descend upon us, but the meritorious satisfaction of the Son of God, made man, and dying for us. It is impossible therefore for so transcendent a glory to fall under the merit of the best of creatures, much more of fallen and sinful man. And so much for the negative.

2. Affirmatively, The worthiness required in those that shall be partakers of the heavenly glory, is only a worthiness of meetness, fitness, or due disposition to receive it; and this wrought in us by the grace, and accepted through the mercy of the Gospel covenant, procured, ratified, and confirmed by the me-

ritorious obedience and sufferings of the Son of God, and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For though there be no just proportion, but, on the contrary, there must needs be a vast inconceivable disproportion between our good works, and the eternal happiness which God by way of recompense bestows on them; yet there must be, and is, some kind of agreeableness and suitableness between our works and that recompense. Our obedience to God ought to be such, as that it may have, though not a merit of condignity to deserve everlasting bliss, (that being, as I have shewn you, utterly impossible,) yet an ordinability, (as a great doctor of our church expresseth it,) i. e. a meetness, fitness, and due disposition toward the obtaining of it. This is the manifest purpose of the texts alleged, and all others which speak of any worthiness in us of the heavenly glory. And in this sense the word ἄξιος, *worthy*, is often used in Scripture in other cases. So Matt. x. our Saviour sendeth forth his twelve apostles to preach his Gospel in the several parts of Palestine; and among other directions he gives them, this is one, ver. 11, 12, 13. *Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is* worthy; *and there abide till ye go thence; and if the house or family be* ἀξία worthy, *let your peace be upon it*[c]. Where it is plain, that by worthy persons and families, are meant such as by an humble, docible temper, and other good inclinations, were prepared, fitted, and disposed to receive the divine doctrines and precepts of the Gospel with effect.

In the same sense as the famous Gallican bishop

[c] Τίς ἐν αὐτῇ ἄξιός ἐστιν.

and martyr Pothinus, in Eusebius[d], being asked by the Roman president "who or what the God of the "Christians was?" answered, "If thou wert worthy "thou shouldest know[e];" i. e. If thou wert fit to receive so sublime a mystery, I would declare it to thee. So here then a man is said to be worthy of the heavenly glory, (that glory which infinitely transcends the merits of the best of creatures,) when he is fit, duly qualified, and disposed to receive it from the divine mercy; when he is such as the infinite goodness of God may bestow heaven on, saving the honour of his wisdom, righteousness, and holiness.

And accordingly St. Paul, who requires from the Thessalonians, in the place before cited, that they be *counted worthy of the kingdom of God*, explains himself, Col. i. 12. *Giving thanks to the Father*, τῷ ἱκανώσαντι ἡμᾶς, *who hath made us fit, or meet, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.* For so ἱκανοῦν signifies, as appears from 2 Cor. iii. 6. where our translators indeed have it, *who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament;* but in the Greek it is ὃς ἱκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς, *who hath made us meet, or fit, to be ministers of the New Testament.*

Thus in general you see that the worthiness required in those that shall be partakers of the heavenly glory, is not a worthiness of condignity or merit, but only a worthiness of meetness or fitness for it.

Now here it must be farther and more particularly inquired, wherein this worthiness of meetness, fitness, or due disposition for the heavenly glory

[d] Eccl. Hist. V. 1. [e] Ἐὰν ᾖς ἄξιος, γνώσῃ.

consists, and what, in its true notion, it comprehends? I answer, it comprehends these following particulars.

1. A steadfast belief and persuasion of the certainty of the future glory. This must be presupposed and laid as a foundation, before we can in good earnest so much as attempt any thing in religion. For *he that cometh to God must believe*, not only *that God is*, but also *that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, Heb. xi. 6. A rewarder of them, not so much in this life, as in that which is to come. For here good and virtuous men do ofttimes suffer many and great evils, and that upon the very account of their virtue.

Indeed some kind of belief of a life to come hath obtained in all ages and all nations of the world, even in those which in almost all other respects have become barbarous. From whence we may justly conclude, that the notion of a future state is either a dictate of the common reason of mankind, or a part of that primitive divine revelation, which God gave to the first men, and was from them derived down to all their posterity; or else that it is the product and effect of both. Yet perhaps this general belief might with some appearance of reason have been suspected as a vulgar error, had not the Son of God himself come down from heaven to attest it, as a very great and most certain truth.

But now he hath *brought life and immortality* into the clearest *light by his Gospel*, wherein are many repeated, plain, and express promises of an inexpressible eternal felicity and happiness, to be bestowed on all such as believe in him, and sincerely obey him. And these promises which he hath made

to us, he hath as it were exemplified and fulfilled in himself, by raising himself from the dead, and ascending into the heavenly glory; that his resurrection and ascension being attested by unexceptionable witnesses, who could not possibly (all things considered) either be deceived themselves, or go about to deceive others in what they testified.

In a word, our whole Christian faith, whereof the belief of a life to come is a principal part, is through the superabundant goodness of God so ascertained to us, by so very many and so convincing arguments, both external in the undoubted miracles wherewith it was confirmed, and the astonishing way of its propagation, and also internal in the very constitution and frame of the religion itself, that I think it impossible (and I speak advisedly) for any sound, honest, and unprejudiced mind, that hath thoroughly weighed and considered them, to withstand their evidence.

So that now, if we do not firmly believe a future state of perfect happiness to the virtuous, and so on the other side of extreme misery to the wicked, our infidelity is incurable and unpardonable. That is the first thing which this worthiness comprehends, a steadfast belief and persuasion of the certainty of the future glory.

2. This worthiness of the heavenly glory comprehends a vigorous and lively apprehension and consideration of its transcendent worth and excellency, compared with whatsoever happiness this present life can offer in competition with it. The worthy Christian, beholding those eternal joys that are set before him, looks down with contempt on all

the glories and enjoyments of this transitory world, despising them as perfect vanities.

It is not enough for us to believe the happiness of the life to come, unless we also lay it in the balance with all the seeming felicities of this present life, and by frequent and serious consideration both of the one and the other, we at last arrive to this determinate and settled judgment, that heaven is infinitely to be preferred before this earth, solid and eternal joys before empty, temporary, and transient pleasures. This determination one would think to be very easy; but, alas! it is not. For though there can be no dispute, whether an eternal and everlasting, or a temporary and transient good be to be preferred; yet in this case, the temporary good hath this advantage above the eternal, that the former is present and at hand, the other future and at a distance; and we are more apt to catch at any present and seeming satisfaction of our craving desire after happiness, than to wait with patience for a future one, though we cannot but think it the far greater good. Just as some prodigal heirs, for a little money in hand to serve their present extravagant occasions, sell their inheritance of a far greater value. Or like the profane Esau, who to gratify a present pungent, languishing appetite, for a mess of pottage parted with his birthright for ever.

Now there is nothing can be a more effectual cure of this folly and madness of ours, than the frequent and serious consideration we are now discoursing of: for this would make things future to be as it were always present with us. Faith itself is an ineffectual virtue, unless it be excited, actuated, and enlivened by this consideration. And I am apt to think, that

among those multitudes of professed Christians that perish everlastingly, there are as many at least that miscarry for want of a serious consideration of the things they believe, as for want of the belief itself; and that unthinking believers take up a very great room in the regions of darkness. But our worthy Christian lives in the daily meditation of eternity, frequently in his most serious thoughts comparing the future and everlasting state with this present vanishing life.

Thus did St. Paul, and he speaks in the plural number, as joining herein all true believers together with himself, 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18. *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.* The holy apostle did not only firmly believe, but also constantly eye and mind the future unseen things, and that so as to compare them with the things that are seen, i. e. the things of this present life, considering these as temporal, the other as eternal. And this made him to bear his afflictions, though in themselves very grievous, not only patiently, but even triumphantly, despising them as light, trivial things, scarce worth the speaking of, i. e. compared with the future happiness, the reward of them; the excellency whereof he seems to labour for words to express, as terming it, *an inexpressibly exceeding and eternal weight*

of glory[f]. A heathen philosopher hath excellently comprised all true practical philosophy in two words, *Bear and forbear*[g]; Bear pain, forbear pleasure; i. e. in more Christian language, Patiently endure all afflictions which God sends on thee, and carefully abstain from all sinful pleasures and enjoyments which the law of God forbids thee. These are two very hard things, and indeed impossible to be performed by us, unless through the grace of God we have a constant respect to the future eternal glory, and this indeed will make them both easy to us.

In a word, we shall never be fit for heaven, or in God's gracious account worthy of it, till we have thoroughly learned that lesson, which the wisest of men, Solomon, inculcates on us, in his excellent book of Ecclesiastes. Wherein almost throughout, he admirably represents the perfect vanity of all things under the sun, and thereupon in the close, chap. xii. 13. makes this inference; *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.* Yea, and his whole and entire happiness too. But how doth this follow? you must take in what is presently added verse 14. *For God shall bring every word into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* He that is fully convinced of these two things, that there is no solid happiness to be found in this world, and that there is a world to come, wherein God will adjudge

[f] Καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν αἰώνιον βάρος δόξης.

[g] Ὑπέχου καὶ ἀπέχου, sustine et abstine. [Ἀνέχου καὶ ἀπέχου.]

men to an everlasting state, either of happiness or misery respectively, as they have made their choice and acted here, must necessarily subscribe to the truth of Solomon's conclusion, that true religion is the only way to true happiness. Thus Solomon discoursed even under the Old Testament.

Nor is it any wonder that God's own people, even under that dispensation, had such an apprehension of things, when we find the same notion in the writings of the very heathens. I instance in Seneca, who out of Plato, comparing the present transient things with things future and eternal, thus excellently discourseth in his 59th Epistle. "All those things which are subject to our senses, and excite and inflame our passions and affections, Plato will not allow to be in the number of those things which truly are or exist. They are but imaginary things, carrying some face and appearance for a while. There is none of them stable, solid, or substantial. And yet we desire them, as if they were always to be and continue, and as if we ourselves were always to enjoy them. But let us direct our minds to things eternal; let us contemn and despise all those things, which are so far from having any true worth in them, that it is disputable whether they have at all any real proper being and existence[h]." What could a Christian divine have said better?

[h] Omnia ista, quæ sensibus serviunt, quæ nos accendunt et irritant, negat Plato ex iis esse, quæ vere sunt. Igitur ista imaginaria sunt, et ad tempus aliquam faciem habent. Nihil horum stabile nec solidum est. Et nos tamen ea cupimus tanquam aut semper futura, aut semper habituri. Mittamus animum ad illa quæ æterna sunt. Contemnamus omnia, quæ adeo pretiosa non sunt, ut an sint omnino dubium sit.

That is the second thing which this worthiness comprehends, viz. a vigorous and lively apprehension and consideration of the transcendent worth and excellency of the heavenly glory, compared with whatsoever happiness this life can offer to us.

3. This worthiness of the future glory comprehends a well weighed and fixed resolution to part with any thing that is most dear to us in this world, rather than to lose our interest and share in it. This resolution depends indeed upon the former apprehension; but yet it is a distinct thing from it, and deserves a distinct consideration.

Now that this resolution, as also the practice of it, as occasion is offered, is absolutely necessary to render us worthy, i. e. to qualify and fit us to be partakers of Christ and his heavenly kingdom, our Lord himself most plainly and expressly assures us, Matt. x. 37. &c. *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*

Christ will not endure a superior, no, nor an equal, in our hearts and affections, he will reign there as our supreme and sovereign Lord, or not at all. If our dearest friends or nearest relations, if our worldly goods and estates, if our temporal life itself be dearer to us than our deservedly dearest Saviour and Redeemer, so as that, when they stand in competition, we choose to quit his service and our duty to him, rather than to part with them; it is most certain, we shall be accounted utterly unworthy of him and his

heavenly kingdom. God be praised, though not very long since a dismal cloud hung just over our heads, and sadly threatened us, yet now we are in no very near prospect of a time of persecution, wherein we shall be put to this trial.

But yet we should always retain a preparation of mind, when God calls us to it, to do or suffer any thing, rather than endanger our interest in Christ, and that inestimable happiness, that is offered us in, with, and by him. This preparation of mind, indeed, many confident persons boast of, who are very far from it; as on the other side, many a sincere and humble Christian may tremble at the apprehension that he wants it, when indeed he hath it.

But by our behaviour in a peaceable, prosperous time, we may shrewdly guess what we should do in a time of trial. He that cannot quit a base vile lust, upon Christ's command, we may be certain will never part with his life for Christ's sake. He that cannot endure the little severities of mortification, will hardly suffer the pains of martyrdom. He who through an evil conscience lives in a continual slavish fear of a natural death, will scarce with courage and resolution meet a violent death, though in never so good a cause. He that, in the abundance of the good things of this life, cannot, by the many repeated strict commands and most bountiful promises of our Lord, be persuaded to expend a considerable portion of his estate in pious and charitable uses, you may be certain, if Christ should call him *to forsake all and follow him*, he would turn his back upon this call; and though perhaps he might, with the rich young man in the Gospel, *go away sorrowful*, as being loath to leave his hopes of

heaven; yet go away he would, leaving Christ, and cleaving to the world.

In a word, no covetous, or voluptuous, or ambitious man can be *idoneus auditor*, a "fit hearer "of the doctrine of the cross;" nor will either of them, whilst such, be ever able to practise it. But on the other side, the truly mortified Christian, that is dead to this world, and lives the life of God, that serves God, and doth his duty faithfully in the time of peace, let him not be over solicitous what he shall do in the time of persecution; but let him humbly depend upon the grace and goodness of God, which will never fail him. He may comfort himself with the sure promise of God by St. Paul to all good Christians, 1 Cor. x. 13. *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* And so much of the third thing which this worthiness comprehends, viz. a well weighed and fixed resolution, &c.

4. This worthiness of meetness, fitness, or due disposition for the heavenly glory, comprehends a deep and profound sense of our own utter unworthiness of it. "A great part of our worthiness consists "in an ingenuous confession and acknowledgment of "our unworthiness[f]," saith a great author upon this subject.

We can never in God's gracious account be worthy of the future happiness, i. e. fit to receive it from God's infinite mercy in Christ, if we think ourselves worthy of it, i. e. in the least to merit or deserve it.

[f] Magna pars est dignitatis nostræ, indignitatem nostram ingenue confiteri.

No, on the contrary, the best of us, after all our best performances, must sue for heaven in the quality of poor, worthless, nay, sinful creatures.

We must debase ourselves to the lowest degree, and extol and magnify the riches of God's grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, who hath called us to the participation of so excellent a glory, and admits us to it upon so equitable, so easy a condition, as that of *faith working by love;* which also by the assistance of his Holy Spirit we are enabled to perform. David, when he saw but this lower heaven, with the glorious lights that shine therein, and considered that those excellent bodies are all subservient to the uses of us mortal men, that crawl on this spot of earth, was wrapt into wonder and astonishment, as we find Psalm viii. 3. &c. *When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.* But if we could, as St. Paul once did, look within the veil, into the holy of holies, the highest heaven, the presence-chamber of the supreme and universal King, and see but a glimpse of the supertranscendent glories that are therein; and then reflected, that this is the glory to which we clods of earth are called and invited, yea, and (*Hear, O heaven! and give ear, O earth!*) wooed to accept; how should we be even swallowed up with amazement, and, if we were able to speak for wonder, how should we forbear to cry out, "O infinitely "good and gracious God! O most meritorious Sa- "viour and Redeemer Jesus! who when thou hadst

" overcome the sharpness of death, didst open this " kingdom of heaven to all believers!"

It is very easy for us to lose ourselves in this speculation, and therefore I pass from it to what remains.

5. And lastly, This worthiness of the heavenly glory comprehends a mighty zeal, industry, and diligence in our endeavour to obtain it.

He that believes he shall come to heaven without labour and diligence, his belief is contrary to the very nature and notion of true faith, which the divine author of the Epistle to the Hebrews assures us is to believe, that *God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, not of such as negligently and lazily serve him. And accordingly the same author exhorts us, *not to be slothful, but to be followers of them, who through faith and patience* (i. e. an unwearied diligence and perseverance in the service of God) *inherit the promises.*

Indeed the holy Scriptures do every where inculcate and press on us an earnest, vehement study and endeavour in the business of our salvation. We are commanded to *strive to enter in at the strait gate*; to labour *for that meat which endures to everlasting life*; to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*; to *press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*; to *give all diligence, to make our calling and election sure*; *that so an entrance may be ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

But I shall insist only on that one text, as most apposite to our present purpose, which on another account we have already cited out of Luke xxi. 36.

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

They are the words of our Lord himself, wherein he plainly shews us what we must do, if we will be accounted worthy to escape those dreadful things, which shall befall the wicked at the day of the universal judgment, (for that he principally respects in that chapter, and not only the destruction of the wicked Jews, the type and shadow of it,) and to stand before the Judge as acquitted and absolved persons; to stand at his right hand among those holy ones, to whom he will say, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* If we would be accounted, through the grace and mercy of God in Christ Jesus, worthy of this, we must do these two things, we must *watch*, and we must *pray*, and that *always*. We must *watch*, i. e. stand upon our guard, look about us, use all possible care and diligence to avoid those temptations to sin wherewith we are surrounded; and not only so, but we must also watch, and carefully observe all opportunities of doing our duty, of doing and receiving good: nor must we only watch, but also pray to God for his grace, to enable us to do our duty, and to persevere therein.

How aptly are these two things joined together! We must not presume on the assistance of God's grace without our own care and endeavour; nor must we so rely on our own endeavour, as not to see our continual need of God's grace, without which all our endeavours will prove vain and ineffectual.

Προσοχὴ and προσευχὴ, *care* and *prayer*, must go together, and in both we must persevere. We must *watch and pray* ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ *at all times*; i. e. we must live in the daily exercise of watchfulness, care, and diligence, about the concerns of our immortal souls; and also in a constant course of devotion, of serious and most earnest prayer to God day and night, for his grace to assist us; ever both looking to ourselves, and also looking to God for help. This must be our constant employment, whilst we live on this earth.

And if thus we do, our Lord himself, who is to be our Judge, hath beforehand assured us, that *at the great day of trial we shall be accounted worthy to stand before him:* i. e. we shall carry our cause at his tribunal, be accounted and pronounced righteous in his sight, according to that law of grace and mercy, which he, as our Saviour, hath procured, ratified, and confirmed with his most precious blood.

This is the worthiness required in those that shall be partakers of the future heavenly glory. It comprehends these five things: 1. A steadfast belief and persuasion of the certainty of the future glory. 2. A vigorous and lively apprehension and consideration of its transcendent worth and excellence, compared with whatsoever happiness this present life can offer in competition with it. 3. A well weighed and fixed resolution to part with any thing that is most dear to us in this world, rather than lose our shares and interest therein. 4. A profound and deep sense of our own utter unworthiness of it. 5. And lastly, A mighty zeal, industry, and diligence in our endeavour to obtain it.

APPLICATION.

Now from this discourse, (that I may briefly apply it,) we cannot but see too much reason sadly to reflect on the state and condition of the generality of professed Christians. If none shall be partakers of the future heavenly glory, but such as have this worthiness of meetness, fitness, and due disposition for it, how few are there among those that have been baptized into the faith of Christ, and profess their hopes of heaven, who can produce any colourable claim and title to it!

There are two sorts of persons, I am sure, that are here deeply concerned.

1. If this be true, what will become of the notoriously vicious, the gross and scandalous sinner, the drunkard, the adulterer, the fornicator, the common swearer, the malicious and revengeful person, the liar, the extortioner, the oppressor, and such like? Can any of these men (even in the most merciful estimation) be thought worthy of, i. e. meet and fit for the heavenly glory? was the kingdom of heaven, think you, ever prepared or designed for such as these? Certainly no. I need not insist long on this, the case is so plain; and therefore St. Paul seems to wonder at the sottish and stupid ignorance of those who can imagine a vicious life to be reconcileable with the hopes of heaven; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* The good Lord of his mercy open the eyes of these

men, that they may see their wretched condition before it be too late, and seasonably take the advice of St. James, chap. iv. 8, 9, 10. *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

2. This discourse discovers the vain hope of the careless, negligent, idle, and unprofitable Christian, that rests in a negative religion; who hath no other ground for his hope of heaven, but that he is no scandalous sinner; whilst in the mean time he hath no lively sense of religion, and lives in the ordinary neglect of the manifest duties of Christianity, both those of piety towards God, and of charity towards his neighbour; who by his carelessness in those matters declares that religion is none of his main design or business. How much a stranger is this man to frequent, fervent, and serious prayer in private! to the diligent and daily study of the holy Scriptures! to daily meditation of heaven and heavenly things! In a word, view him in the whole course of his life, and you will think he scarce in good earnest believed a life to come, or had any serious thoughts of his eternal state in the other world. Now surely the worthiness we have been discoursing of implies another kind of religion than this.

The sum is, no man shall be accounted worthy of the future heavenly glory, but he that steadfastly believing it, doth before all things desire it, and thinks no labour too much to obtain it. He whose greatest care it is, how he may save his precious and

immortal soul, and accordingly makes religion his main business. He who watches and prays daily, and, in a word, who lives a life fruitful of good works, works of piety towards God, and (according to his ability) of charity towards men. This man, and he only, though indeed unworthy in himself, yet through the rich mercy of God, and the merits of Christ, shall be accounted worthy of the blessed immortality, to live with the holy angels, yea with God himself, in the beatific vision and fruition of him for ever and ever.

To which blessed state God of his infinite mercy bring us all, through his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, adoration and worship, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON X.[a]

THAT THE POVERTY OF THE FIRST PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL WAS DESIGNED BY PROVIDENCE TO CONVINCE THE WORLD OF THEIR SINCERITY: AND THAT EVEN PERSONS DIVINELY INSPIRED, AND MINISTERS OF GOD, DID NOT SO WHOLLY DEPEND UPON DIVINE INSPIRATION, BUT THAT THEY MADE USE ALSO OF THE ORDINARY HELP AND MEANS, SUCH AS READING OF BOOKS, WITH STUDY AND MEDITATION ON THEM, FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE IN THE DISCHARGE OF THEIR OFFICE.

2 TIM. iv. 13.

The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.

THE sacred writings of the Old and New Testament, being penned by holy persons either entirely and immediately inspired, or directed and assisted by the divine Spirit in what they meditated and wrote, have nothing in them that is frivolous or useless, nothing but what may yield us profitable matter of instruction, if rightly understood.

The seemingly very little things in them are many times, upon farther search and consideration, found

[a] [This Sermon was probably written some years before the last: he speaks of the church's prosperity after a few interruptions, and alludes to the Quakers, who were numerous in his parish of Suddington: this might seem to fix the date between the restoration and 1685, when he left Suddington.]

to be of no little use. Such is the text I have now read: a place of Scripture which I have made choice of, not so much to shew my skill in improving a seemingly barren text, as because it is the most apposite, and the fittest I could find, whereon to found a discourse, which I think may be of very good use to many in the age wherein we live. To make way whereunto, I must borrow some of your time and patience for the opening and explaining of the text itself.

St. Paul wrote this Epistle from Rome to Timothy in the Lesser Asia, where St. Paul had formerly been, and had in that time thrice at least visited Troas, the chief city of a country of that name, the same with the old city of Troy, so famous for the ten years siege of the Grecians against it. At his last being at that city he had left some things behind him there, which he now desires Timothy, when he came to Rome, to bring with him, as things that he stood in need of, and might be useful to him: and what were they?

First, *The cloke that I left at Troas;* in the Greek it is τὸν φελόνην, a word borrowed from the Latins, as appears from the other writing of it often used, τὸν φενόλην, *penulam*, which signifies a cloke, or upper garment, such as travellers use to defend themselves with from the cold or bad weather.

And the books. The sacred books of the Old Testament, say some very confidently; but I must crave leave to dissent from them. For though I question not but that St. Paul was very conversant in those sacred books, and esteemed them above all human writings, yet it is very improbable that these were the books here meant. For the Scriptures of

the Old Testament were to be had in all the churches of Christ where St. Paul came, being constantly read in the Christian assemblies, as well as in those of the Jews; so that he could not be in such want of them, as to send for them from Rome as far as Troas. Nor is it likely, that he would give the common appellative name of *books* to the divinely inspired writings, without any other note of distinction.

But it is certain, that St. Paul had read other books besides the Scriptures, which what they were may best be gathered from his education, and from those footsteps and tracings of his reading, which appear in his writings. He was bred a scholar *at the feet of Gamaliel,* Acts xxii. 3. a learned and famous doctor among the Jews, very probably the same of whom we read, Acts v. 34. *Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of law, had in reputation among all the people,* &c. But that he was a very learned and celebrated doctor among the Jews of that age is most certain, and confessed by all Christian expositors.

Under this famous tutor St. Paul questionless made a great proficiency in all the learning of his time and country. There were then extant very excellent books of Jewish learning, written by men renowned in their generations, before our Saviour's coming in the flesh; (which are now perished, little more than the authors' names surviving;) of which St. Paul, being the pupil of so great a master in that sort of learning, cannot reasonably be supposed to have been ignorant. These were partly exegetical, and explanatory of the mysterious senses veiled under the letter of the Law and the Prophets; and

partly historical. The ancient books, containing the mysteries of the Jewish religion, are by the latter Jews stifled and suppressed, as making too much for the Christian cause. Yet we have somewhat of this kind of learning still preserved, especially in the writings of Philo the Jew, though mixed with much trash; like a few thin and slender veins of gold running through a great mass or body of earth and dross. And it is plain to him that hath carefully read St. Paul's Epistles, and is acquainted also with the writings of Philo, that the holy apostle well understood that cabalistical theology of the Jews, and retained so much of it, as by the direction of the divine Spirit in him, he found to be sound, good, and genuine. In the tenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul expounds the *manna showered on the Israelites in the wilderness*, and *the rock that gave them water to quench their thirst*, to be significations of our Saviour Christ; and shews moreover, that *the angel going before the people of God in that their pilgrimage*, and *tempted by them*, was our Lord Christ. And all this Philo likewise understands of the Λόγος, the *Word*[b], or Son of God, which we Christians know to have been in the fulness of time made man, and called by the name of Jesus Christ. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, (who is supposed by some to have been St. Paul himself, but was questionless, if not St. Paul, yet a contemporary and acquaintance of his,) in the fourth chapter of that Epistle, ver. 12, 13. speaking of the Λόγος, the *Word* of God, useth almost the very same expressions, but

[b] Vide Phil.

altogether the same sense, that Philo hath, discoursing of the same matter in his writings; as hath been observed by the learned Grotius on the place; who, from that and other indications, conjectures, that the divine author had read the books of that learned Jew.

And for the Jewish history, whence had St. Paul the names of Jannes and Jambres, no where mentioned in the sacred chronicle, but from some other ancient records extant in his time, which he had read, and so far approved? Nor was St. Paul unacquainted with the heathen writers celebrated in his time; for these he sometimes makes use of for the conviction of the heathens with whom he had to do, and whose apostle chiefly and especially he was, as by his learning the fittest for that office. Thus in his sermon to the Athenians, Acts xvii. 28. he quotes a testimony out of one of the Greek poets, in these words: *As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.* The poet he cites was of Cilicia, St. Paul's native country, named Aratus, who had this in his poems, "For we "are also his offspring [c]."

Thus also in his Epistle to Titus, chap. i. 12. he cites a verse of one of the prophets or poets of the Cretans, *One of them, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and slow bellies* [d]. Epimenides is the author of the verse, who was a prophet, not only in the sense that all poets are so called, but a pretender also to enthusiasm and prophecy in the stricter sense, as Cicero

[c] Τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν.

[d] Κρῆτες ἀεὶ ψεῦσται, κακὰ θηρία, γαστέρες ἀργαί.

tells us in his book of Divination[e], and owned as such among the heathens, even the more learned of them.

So in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xv. 33. he cites this Greek sentence;

Φθείρουσιν ἤθη χρῆσθ' ὁμιλίαι κακαί.

i. e. *Evil communications corrupt good manners;* which is a verse of the poet Menander, as St. Jerom hath long ago observed. And that St. Paul had diligently perused the Epistles of Heraclitus the Ephesian, hath been abundantly proved by the learned Scultetus[f], who also gathers from the Platonic phrases often used by him, that he had read likewise some writings of the Platonists[g].

Some few choice books of both these kinds, (but very few, according to his poverty,) St. Paul had made a shift to get and preserve, but for the present left at Troas, from whence he desires Timothy to convey them, as being of use to him. But let us go on in the words of the text.

But especially the parchments, τὰς μεμβράνας, a Latin word again made Greek, signifying the *skins of beasts,* smoothed, dried, and fitted to receive writing on them, which we call parchments. These, as learned interpreters generally conclude[h], (nor can it well be otherwise imagined,) were St. Paul's *adversaria,* or commonplace books, wherein he had written down what he had observed, as worthy of more especial notice, in the reading either of the Scrip-

[e] [Lib. I. 18.]

[f] Orat. de Philol. et Theol. conjunctione, Delic. Evangelicis præmissa.

[g] Vid. Scult. Observ. in 2 Tim. i. 6.

[h] V. Est. et Grot. in loc.

tures of the Old Testament, or the other books but now mentioned, for the help of his memory. The blessed apostle could not, by reason of his poverty, (as hath been already observed,) be the master and owner of a complete library of the learned books extant in his time; and if he could, it was not possible for him to carry it about with him in his travels: and therefore he had his parchments, wherein he had noted what he thought might be of use to him, out of the many books he had read. Concerning these collections, as being probably the fruit of some years reading and study, he gives Timothy a most special charge to take care of their safe conveyance to him: *but especially the parchments.*

This may suffice for the explanation of my text. I come now to raise such useful observations from it, as, being so explained, it naturally affords us.

1. Then, I observe here, the poverty and mean estate of the great apostle Paul. It is indeed Erasmus's observation on the place: "Behold the apostle's goods or moveables, a poor cloke to keep him "from the weather, and a few books[i]!" And Grotius's note on the text is to the same purpose: "See "the poverty of so great an apostle, who could not "want so little a thing as a cloke left at Troas, but "charges Timothy to bring it with him from so remote a distance[k]!" Hence St. Paul himself often takes notice of his own poverty. So 1 Cor. iv. 11, 12. *Even unto this present hour, we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and*

[i] En supellectilem apostolicam, penulam quæ defendat ab imbribus et libros aliquot.

[k] Vide paupertatem tanti apostoli qui rem tantillam tam longe relictam, inter damna censuerit.

have no certain dwellingplace; and labour, working with our own hands. And that he lived by his labour, he tells us, Acts xx. 34. *Yea, yourselves know, that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me.* And the same thing he expresseth in other places, which I have not time now to recite.

This was a singular design of God's providence towards the apostles in general, who were all of them kept in a poor and mean, yea in a most afflicted and miserable condition, as St. Paul observes, 1 Cor. iv. 9—13. *For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed unto death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. For unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.*

The design of Providence was, that hereby the world, to whom the apostles preached the Gospel, might be fully convinced of their sincerity in the preaching of it; that they sought not themselves, or their own ease and advantage, but were content for the propagation of the Gospel, of which they were ministers, to endure the greatest inconveniences, necessities, and extremities. This was sufficient to satisfy all sober and reasonable persons, that they had no design of their own; that their only aim was

the advancement of that truth, which, with so great a loss and hazard to themselves, they constantly published to the world.

But this was not to be the standard and measure of the ministers of Christ, in the after more flourishing and prosperous condition of the church, when *kings should become their nursing fathers, and queens their nursing mothers*, as it was prophesied, Isaiah xlix. 23. The church of Christ, even in the first ages, and times of persecution, had its γαλήνη, its *calm* sometimes, when the powers of the earth favoured them, and allowed them a more peaceable and prosperous condition. But when Constantine declared himself Christian, the church grew splendid and glorious, and the succeeding emperors thought it their glory to advance the wealth and honour of it. This prosperous estate of Christians, with some few interruptions, is (God be praised) conveyed down to us at this day, and may it for ever continue; whilst the designs of those that envy the church's prosperity perish, and are brought to nought. But if ever a time of poverty and affliction shall befall us, we are then to follow the example of the apostles of Christ; to be contented with our poverty and affliction, and by no means to be deterred from the constant asserting of the truth we preach and profess.

But this is not the point I intend to prosecute, there being another observation as naturally arising from my text, and which I designed to be the chief subject of my discourse at this time.

2. Therefore I observe, that even the divinely inspired persons and ministers of God, did not so wholly depend upon divine inspiration, but that they

made use also of the ordinary helps and means, such as reading of books, with study and meditation on them, for their assistance in the discharge of their office.

St. Paul had his books which he had read, and his manuscripts too, or collection of notes, which he found to be useful to him, and therefore gives Timothy a special charge to convey them safely to him.

And it is farther to be observed, that he earnestly exhorts his son Timothy to the same course of reading and study, 1 Tim. iv. 13, 14, 15. *Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.* Where we have several things observable to our purpose. 1. The exhortation is to Timothy, a man placed by the apostles bishop at Ephesus, the metropolis of the Lesser Asia, which, though called the Lesser, was of a very great and wide extent; a man that was the beloved son, or darling scholar and disciple, of the great apostle St. Paul; a man marked out long before by prophecies, as one that should prove a very eminent and excellent person, or by the spirit of prophecy in the apostles, after a singular manner appointed to the ministry of the Gospel, 1 Tim. i. 18. a man accordingly endowed with extraordinary and immediately infused abilities, signified by the χάρισμα, or *gift*, said here to be given him in his ordination. This man St. Paul exhorts to reading and meditation, for the better discharge of his office. 2. The order of the apostle's exhortation to him is observable; *Give attendance to reading*,

to exhortation, to doctrine: to reading, before exhortation or doctrine. He is advised to be himself first a well-read and learned divine, that he might be the better able to instruct and teach others. 3. The emphatical words used by the apostle in the exhortation, are remarkable. He adviseth Timothy, not only to *read* and *study*, that he might be able to exhort and teach with profit; but presseth him to *give attendance* to reading, not to *neglect* the supernatural gift bestowed on him, to *meditate* on what he read and learned, and to addict and *give himself wholly* to these things. All which phrases plainly signify the greatest industry and diligence to be used by him in reading and study, and the other exercises there mentioned. The same thing doubtless St. Paul intends, when he admonisheth the same Timothy to *stir up the gift of God* within him, 2 Tim. i. 6. where the Greek word is ἀναζωπυρεῖν, which properly signifies to *cherish* or *rekindle* fire, (that will otherwise go out and die in its own ashes,) by blowing it up, and adding new fuel to it.

Thus the gifts of God in men, even the extraordinary gifts, such as Timothy had, will soon decay, die, and be extinguished in the ashes, as it were, of their sloth and negligence, and require continual refreshment and reparation from their diligence in reading, studying, and praying; and I add also, charitable using and exercising those gifts for the good of others. A learned man thinks, that the apostle, speaking of *gifts* more immediately infused from above, alludes to the *fire of the altar under the law*, that first came down from heaven, but was afterwards to be preserved and maintained by the priests with a constant supply of wood, and their

continual care in cherishing it; Leviticus vi. 12, 13. compared with chap. ix. 24. This is sufficient to shew us the practice of the divinely inspired persons under the New Testament.

I add, that the holy prophets, under the Old Testament, took the same course, not depending so wholly upon immediate revelation and inspiration from God, as to think all endeavour and diligence on their own part needless; but, on the contrary, taking pains to be prophets, being for a long time educated in societies and schools of that divine learning, under a constant discipline and exercise for the attaining of the gift of prophecy; and when they had attained it, still using a proportionable diligence for the maintenance, preservation, and increase of it. For we read of colleges and incorporated societies, consisting of prophets and their sons, or of prophets and their scholars and disciples, the one receiving instruction from the other, just as it is in the colleges of our universities.

That there were such colleges of prophets anciently among the Jews, over each of which one more excellent prophet was president, is most certain from divers texts of Scripture. The first mention of such a college we have 1 Sam. x. 10. *And when they* (i. e. Saul and his company) *came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met them,* &c. *A company of prophets,* that is, saith Drusius, "a company of students devoting themselves to the study of prophecy[1]." Where by the way observe, that those prophetic colleges were usually erected in remoter and higher places, on hills distant from towns

[1] Cohors studiosorum operam dantium prophetiæ.

and cities, as the fittest and most commodious places for a studious contemplative life. But more clear is that place, 1 Sam. xix. 20. *And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them,* &c. Here we have plainly a college, or society of prophets together, and Samuel appointed as president of the college.

Of *the sons of the prophets,* or those students that entered themselves in the colleges of the prophets, to be instructed by their several presidents, we have express mention 2 Kings ii. where, verse 3, we read of *the sons of the prophets* that were at Bethel coming to Elisha, and giving him warning that Elias should presently be taken from him. And verse 7 there is mention made of another college of prophets at Jericho, who afterwards, verse 15, are said to have done reverence to Elisha succeeding Elias.

So in 2 Kings iv. 38. we read, that Elisha being at Gilgal, *the sons of the prophets were sitting before him,* viz. in the posture of disciples and scholars, to learn and receive instruction from their master. And because the disciples sat in a lower form or seat, under their masters and teachers, they are said to sit at their feet. Hence the people of Israel's receiving the law from God is thus expressed, *They sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words,* Deut. xxxiii. 3. So St. Paul is said to have been *brought up,* or educated, *at the feet of Gamaliel,* Acts xxii. 3.

The business of these colleges of the prophets is by learned men described to be this: they were taught by their presidents the law of God; they

were instructed in the prophecies of those prophets that went before them; they were taught by what ways and means they might obtain the gift of prophecy, or the increase of it; they were informed what was the scope and signification of the sacrifices and ceremonial laws, by which the things that were to come to pass in the time of the Messias were prefigured; and, in a word, they were in those colleges taught the whole mystery of the Jewish religion, according to the time and age, and their several capacities. So that even prophecy was a science among the ancient Jews, and men were trained up to it by discipline and education.

I shall only add, that Daniel, the most excellent of prophets, (though the latter Jews out of prejudice will scarce allow him a room or place in that sacred order,) is not ashamed to confess, that he had learned something by reading the writings of the prophet Jeremiah that was before him, Dan. ix. 2. *I Daniel understood by books the number of years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet.* Which also may serve to confirm what was said before, that the sons of the prophets in their colleges were instructed in the prophecies of those prophets who were before them. For if so accomplished a prophet as Daniel made use of the books of the preceding prophets, we may be sure that those young novices in the study of prophecy were taught by their masters diligently to peruse them.

And this may suffice for the proof of my latter observation, viz. That even the divinely inspired persons and ministers of God did not so wholly depend upon divine inspiration, but that they made use also of the ordinary helps and means; such as read-

ing of books, with study and meditation on them, for their assistance in the discharge of their office.

I now proceed to the use and improvement of this doctrine.

1. This serves to discover the folly of those who renounce all books and book-learning as needless, and of no use to them; and bid defiance to all study and reading, under pretence of a spirit or light within them, sufficiently able to direct and guide them in all things. Of which sort the sect called Quakers are especially to be noted. For you see the great apostle St. Paul read books, not only sacred, but human, and had his parchments, probably collections of notes gathered out of the books that he had read; and that the same St. Paul exhorts his beloved Timothy, an archbishop in the apostolic church, to the same diligence in reading and studying, that he might be the better enabled for the discharge of his duty; and lastly, that the prophets themselves under the Old Testament observed the same method. What an insufferable impudence then are they guilty of, who nowadays decry all reading, study, and learning, and rely only on enthusiasm and immediate inspiration! The apostles, the prophets, and other undoubtedly inspired persons, thought that necessary, which these men (that cannot give the least proof of any such inspiration in themselves) despise as wholly useless to them. Let me advise them to consider, that the Spirit of God, even in the times of the extraordinary dispensation of it, was never given to any but the diligent and industrious, and such as did their best to attain divine wisdom; not only by praying for it, but also by reading and studying the books and writings of the wise men that were before

them. Let them consider, that the Spirit of God never dwelt with the slothful or lazy; or with those who, presuming on its inspiration, neglected the use of those ordinary means of getting knowledge, which Providence afforded them. The divine assistance and human industry always went together hand in hand, and an anathema is due to that doctrine that separates and divides them.

And yet, see the age we live in! enthusiasm and atheism divide the spoil, and the former makes way for the latter, till at length it be devoured by it. In the mean while enthusiasm fills the conventicle and empties the church: silly people dance after its pipe, and are lured by it from their lawful, orthodox teachers, to run they know not whither, to hear they know not whom, and to learn they know not what. And till the minds of men are better informed and possessed with righter notions of things, it is impossible they should ever be brought to any regular and sober religion. Nothing in religion will nowadays be acceptable to many, but what pretends to a more immediate inspiration from God; and the bare colour thereof, be it never so small and slender, will almost make any thing pass for current divinity. Let a man preach without authority, and without book, and make show as if he did it extempore, and by the sudden suggestion of the Spirit, and he shall be cried up by the vulgar, though he deliver the plainest nonsense. No discourse will please them, but that which is not only delivered without book, (for so to do is no fault, but rather commendable, when it is added as an ornament to a well studied and substantial discourse, and done without vanity, and occasions no expense of time, that might be spent to

better purpose,) but also pretended to be made without book, that is, without consulting beforehand the books of the wise and learned. Thus the people are deceived, and love to be so, and who can help it?

And yet my charity prompts me to try a dilemma on these miserably deluded persons. They that tell you they preach without the help of any precedent reading or study, by a mere and immediate dependence on the assistance of the Spirit, either they say true or false: if what they say be true, they are guilty of a very great and intolerable presumption, in despising those helps which the divinely-inspired persons both under the Old and New Testament thought useful to them: if they tell you that which is false, and whilst they pretend to immediate inspiration, use the help of reading and study, you are to shun them as liars and cheats, and to have no more to do with them. The truth is, the men with whom we have to do are of two sorts, each of which must needs fall under the one or the other part of the dilemma. Some of them do indeed in their profession renounce, and in their practice too much neglect, reading and study, as sufficiently appears by the fulsome repetitions, impertinence, nonsense, and too often heresies and blasphemies in their discourses: others take some pains for what they do, and shew something of industry and diligence in their performances, easily to be discovered by a more careful observer of them, and thereby betray the fraud and falsehood of their pretences.

Intolerable is the consequence of the error I am now reproving; for it directly tends to the perfect phrensy and madness of those, who declaim against the nurseries of learning, the universities themselves,

as the nurseries of men, that will by their carnal reasoning and learning obstruct the advancement of the more spiritual Gospel. Alas! what will this conceit bring men to at length, but barbarism and confusion? And who are the authors that teach these silly men to decry learning, but the papists, whom yet they seem most of all to defy? For take away universities and learning, and they are sure of their opportunity, and that the more ignorant will in tract of time be easily brought to any religion, and so to theirs. If learning and the schools of learning be once suppressed among us, we shall in a little time have no learned men to stand in the gap, and to keep out popery. *Hoc Ithacus velit*, this is that which the Jesuit would have, and passionately desires. In short, popery was born and bred in ignorant and unlearned ages; and as soon as learning revived, popery began to decline, till at last the happy reformation ensued, which we now enjoy; and if ever learning run to decay again, we must expect to relapse into popery, or something else as bad as or worse than that.

But let us proceed in the improvement of the doctrine we are now upon.

2. This may teach all ministers of the Gospel their duty, viz. diligently to read and study the holy Scriptures in the first place, and next to them the books of learned and good men that have bestowed their pains in explaining them, and whatever books besides they can get which may be any way useful to them in their ministry.

It is the note of the learned and judicious Estius upon the text: "Let bishops and priests," saith he, "learn from hence what great need they have of

" continual reading and study, how great soever " their proficiency may already be; seeing St. Paul, " who had been taught the mysteries of religion by " the Lord Christ himself, and now a long time ex- " ercised in the office of an apostle, had still occasion " to make use of books." And when we consider how strict a charge the same apostle gives Timothy, that great apostolic prelate, to apply himself to reading and study; and that the inspired prophets, under the Old Testament, thought the same exercises necessary for themselves; how dare we (very mushrooms, the best of us, compared to them) either through pride, scorn and reject, or out of sloth and laziness, neglect those helps? We ought not in the least to value the clamours of the wild fanatics among us, who cry out, " that if we study for what " we do, we do it not by the Spirit;" as if the assistance of the Spirit and human industry were inconsistent with, yea repugnant to each other. For on the contrary we may be assured, from what hath been said, that the Spirit of God will help none but the studious and industrious. Let us therefore give attendance to reading and study, yea addict ourselves wholly to these exercises, with daily prayer to God for his blessing on them, that our profiting may appear unto all men.

3. And lastly, this may serve to instruct also lay Christians in their duty of diligently reading the sacred Scriptures, and those other good books, that God's providence hath furnished them with, in order to their instruction in the matters of religion. If the ministers of Christ, yea the very apostles of Christ, have thought reading and study useful to them, can you think you have no need at all of

it? It is true, more time and pains in those exercises is required of the ministers of religion, than of others; but none are wholly exempted and excused from the duty; because all men are bound to be *wise unto salvation*, and to be so requires no small pains and industry. Ministers are to read that they may be able to teach; and you are to read that you may be capable of learning, or being taught. For unless there be a concurrent industry in the teacher and the disciple, the one teacheth in vain, because the other will never learn.

Be sure therefore daily to read the holy Scriptures, and those other good books you have or can procure, that may help you to understand them. And if any of you cannot read yourselves, (I hope there are very few, if any, in this congregation under so unhappy circumstances,) get some relation, friend, or neighbour to read to you; and they must be very uncharitable indeed, that will deny you that assistance. They that cannot read are concerned to double their diligence in hearing, and in a more careful attendance on all opportunities of instruction that shall be offered them in public, and in asking and seeking after instruction from their ministers in private, adding their daily and most earnest prayers to God for the assistance of his holy Spirit in the use of those means, and encouraging themselves with that promise of his, James i. 5. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

In a word, let none of you think or imagine divine wisdom and knowledge so cheap a thing, as to be obtained without labour and diligence. And re-

member that it is worth your while and pains to learn the right way to heaven; for if you miss it, you are undone for ever.

Wherefore *consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.*

To God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, adoration and worship, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XI.

THE EXISTENCE OF ANGELS PROVED FROM REASON AS WELL AS SCRIPTURE, THEIR CREATION BY GOD, THE FALL OF SOME OF THEM, THE NATURE OF THE HOLY ANGELS, THEIR STATE AND CONDITION IN REFERENCE TO GOD.

HEBREWS i. 14.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

THE subject-matter of my text, concerning the holy angels of God, hath suffered between two extremes, the bold presumptuous curiosity of some, and the desperate or supine carelessness and unconcernedness of others about it; some flying too high, others sinking too low; some thinking and speaking too much, others too little of those noble beings, which we call angels. St. Paul takes notice of some in his time, whose curiosity in this inquiry led them to a religious worship of angels, whom therefore he condemns, as *intruding into those things which they had not seen, vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds*, Col. ii. 18.

But to let these pass, about the end of the fourth century (as it is probably conjectured) there came forth a book under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, (the convert and disciple of St. Paul, of whom we read Acts xvii. 34.) entitled, *Concerning the Celestial Hierarchy;* wherein the author speaks so sublimely, so punctually, with so much assurance

of the things above, as if he had himself surveyed the heavenly mansions, and, as a learned man expresseth it, taken an exact inventory of all that is there. The book was either unknown to, or not much relied on, by the catholic doctors of the next ages, as appears by the sentiments and notions they had of the orders of angels, very different from the determinations of that author. But afterwards the schoolmen and others of the church of Rome, taking the book to be really his, whose name it bears, received all the groundless conjectures therein, as very truths, yea well nigh adored them as divine oracles. Nor have these men been contented with the speculations of that author, but have ventured farther, and raised many more curious and fruitless inquiries concerning angels, than he ever dreamt of. It must needs disgust a sober man to read the many nice and idle questions they have started, and taken a great deal of pains to resolve, especially concerning the knowledge of angels. Methinks men that know so little of themselves, and are so unable to give a certain account of the operations of their own inward faculties of understanding, willing, and remembering, nay, of the very perceptions they have of things by their outward senses, should be more modest, and not dare so confidently to discourse of those sublimer beings, or to tell how and what they do or can know.

Wherefore others, out of a dread and abhorrence of such presumption, have run themselves into the contrary extreme, and can scarce endure any professed discourse of angels, or let it pass, without the censure of vain and dangerous curiosity. And this their folly they call prudence, modesty, and humi-

lity, and endeavour to justify it by the authority of an old threadbare maxim, (the common shelter of dulness, stupidity, and negligence about divine things,) "Those things that are above us, do not at "all concern us[a]." I will not undertake to make comparisons between this and the other extreme; but of this I am certain, that the ill consequences of the latter extreme are very great.

For by this conceit, the most noble part of the creation is hid from our eyes, and banished out of the bounds and limits of the Christian philosophy. By this pretence, the majesty of the divine empire, to which so many millions of glorious creatures are subject, is lessened and depressed; and men must needs think too highly of themselves, and too meanly of the great and glorious God, if they are not minded sometimes of those more excellent beings that are between God and themselves, *who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth,* Job iv. 19. By this means we must be ignorant of the great instruments of the divine Providence over us, and deprived of the comfort we might receive from the knowledge of them in the time of our distress and danger. Hereby the best patterns of virtue, which God hath set before us, (next to the example of his most holy Son,) are removed out of our sight; nor can we with a right understanding say that our daily petition, *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,* viz. by the holy angels. In a word, the great mistake of those, who would have the doctrine of angels passed over in silence, will plainly appear by the excellent uses of

[a] Quæ supra nos, nihil ad nos.

the same doctrine, which I shall endeavour to set before you in the conclusion of this discourse.

But to avoid both the extremes mentioned, our only way will be to keep close to the holy Scriptures, and to admit only of such speculations concerning this matter, as are plainly taught us by divine revelation. And a brief summary of the doctrine of Scripture, concerning the holy angels, we have in the short text I have read: *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

It is a negative interrogation, which, according to the known rule, is to be resolved into a strong and vehement affirmation; thus, *They*, i. e. the holy angels, *are certainly all of them ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.* In which proposition I shall take notice, first, of the subject or persons spoken of in the word *they*. Secondly, of the predicate, or that which is spoken and affirmed of them, viz. that *they are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.*

I. The subject of the proposition, or the persons spoken of in the word *they*, are *the holy angels.* For of these the divine author had discoursed in the preceding verses of this chapter, and particularly in the verse immediately going before my text; *But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?* And then it follows, *Are they not all ministering spirits*, &c.

That there are such beings in the regions above us, as we call angels, i. e. certain permanent substances, invisible and imperceptible to our senses, en-

dowed with understanding and power superior to that of human nature, created by and subject to God the supreme Being, and ministering to the divine Providence in the government of the world, and therein especially of the affairs of men, is most certain from the holy Scriptures; even those parts of Scripture which the Sadducees themselves undoubtedly acknowledge, viz. the five books of Moses, afford us proofs of this truth so plain and manifest, that nothing but a prejudiced, perverse, and obstinate mind can resist their evidence.

Nay, the very heathen philosophers confessed the existence of angels, although they called them by other names, as demons, genius's, and the like. To this confession they were led, either by a certain natural instinct and force of human reason, or by a prevailing tradition, derived originally from that institution and revelation which God gave to mankind in the early ages of the world, before the dispersion of the sons of Noah; or by experience of such effects and appearances as are unaccountable but upon supposition of such beings; or by all these together.

It is a question indeed in the schools, whether natural reason directs us to the acknowledgment of this truth. But to me it seems out of all doubt, that the existence of angels may be evinced by very cogent reasons, and such as must needs prevail with all those that will give themselves leisure attentively to consider the nature of things. For,

1. Although man be an excellent creature among the creatures of this lower world, yet that very reason, whereby he excels those other creatures, must needs force him to acknowledge, that he himself is too mean a creature to be the first-born and top of

the creation, the masterpiece of the works of God, who is the great Creator and Framer of all things. Supposing that God hath created a complete world, a perfect system of things comprehending all dégrees of entity, as the schoolmen speak, (which is generally acknowledged by philosophers,) it demonstratively follows, that there are such beings as angels.

We have before us in this lower world several ranks of beings; some that have only bare being, as earth, air, water; some that have life too, as plants and trees, and other vegetables; some that beside life have sense, perception, and discrimination of material objects, as to their outward appearances and accidents, as the brute animals; lastly, some that have beyond all this, a faculty of investigating and searching out the inward nature and properties of things material and sensible, and also of discoursing of immaterial, spiritual, and divine things; which is that to which in our common speech the name of reason or understanding is deservedly appropriated, and is to be found in men, who are the highest order of beings here below.

But yet man is thus rational only in one part of him, being otherwise akin to *the beast that perisheth.* And hence he reasons and discourses of things, not without the help of sense and imagination, and grosser corporeal phantasms, which are as it were the first foundations whereon he raises his highest speculations; and so he is neither wholly nor purely a rational or intelligent creature.

Now it cannot be imagined by any one of deep thought, that the reason of mankind being such, (if we consider human nature, not only as it is now by sin depraved and corrupted, but also as it was and

must needs have been in its original constitution; the *first man* himself being as to his body made out of *the dust of the earth*, and his soul afterwards created, and immediately united to it, Gen. ii. 7. compared with 1 Cor. xv. 45, 46, 47.) should be the most perfect reason of created beings, or that among them all there should be none of a purer and higher capacity, to know and glorify the great Creator of all things.

It remains therefore, that besides and above mankind there is a rank of intelligent beings, separated and abstracted from this heavy matter with which we are clogged, of nearer affinity to the supreme and universal mind, and of a purer and sublimer understanding faculty, than that wherewith we mortals are endowed. And these are the beings which we call angels.

For the farther confirmation and illustration of which argument it is to be considered, that man is evidently a mixed and compounded creature, made up of two very different natures, one far superior to the other, viz. an understanding and an animal nature. Now as we are sure that his inferior animal nature doth exist apart in certain creatures below him, viz. the brutes; so we may be as sure, that his other more noble and understanding nature doth exist separately in certain creatures above him, viz. the angels. Thus there could be no wine mixed with water, unless there were such things as wine and water separated from each other; and as water mixed with wine is a more generous liquor than mere water, and yet pure wine without water is better than it; so man being compounded of the understanding and animal nature, is far superior to

a mere animal without understanding, that is, a brute; and yet a creature that hath a purer intelligence separated from animality, viz. an angel, is a more noble being than he. This is one not contemptible reason to prove the existence of angels; another follows.

2. Forasmuch as we see this earth whereon we are replenished with men innumerable, by nature capable of understanding and knowing, and consequently of serving and glorifying the great Creator of all things; it cannot without a very gross absurdity be imagined, that the more noble heavenly regions above us should be empty or void of intelligent creatures, doing homage to the supreme God. What an odd thing would this earth be, if there were no men in it! And yet it would be a stranger *vacuum* in nature, if in the heaven above there should be no understanding beings, to take notice of the wonders of that place, and to serve and praise the God of heaven. If (to avoid this absurdity) any man, that will not admit of the existence of angels, should have recourse to the opinion of those of old, who held the heavenly luminaries, the stars, to be living creatures, endowed with reason and understanding, this will easily appear to be a very vain refuge.

For if the stars of heaven had any reason or understanding, they would have also some liberty and freedom of will, and consequently would exert and exercise some free actions; but this it is plain they do not, all their motions being natural, determined, and perpetually returning after one and the same law or order, and therefore necessary. For in philosophy those things are said to be necessarily done,

which are always done after the same manner. For this and other plain reasons (which might be produced if the time would permit) that opinion hath been long since, by heathen as well as Christian philosophers, generally exploded.

Besides, the starry heaven is but as it were the floor or pavement of a heaven above it, the supreme or highest heaven, which is by the consent of nations the place of the Almighty's most especial presence; all men by a kind of natural instinct, with minds, eyes, and hands lifted up, directing thither their prayers to God. And can we fancy, that the universal King hath no servants to wait on him in his presence-chamber, when we see so many paying their devotion to him at so great a distance here below? Natural reason therefore directs and leads us to an acknowledgment, that there are certain intelligent creatures in the upper world, who, as they are more remote from the dregs of matter wherein we are immersed, so are they of a more pure, refined, and excellent substance, and as far exceeding us in their way of understanding and glorifying the supreme God, as they are of nearer admission to the place where his glory is in the most especial manner manifested: and these are they, who in our sacred writings are known by the name of angels.

And so much of the real existence of angels, proved by the authority of the divinely inspired writers, by the consent of heathen philosophers, and by very powerful reasons; which I thought fit to premise, lest there should happen to be any Sadducee in this congregation, lurking under the Christian name and profession, (as it is certain too too many such there are in the Christian world, and

even in this our nation,) who might deride our intended discourse of angels, as spent upon a mere fiction, or creature of fancy, no where existing in the nature of things. I now proceed.

When the angels first received their being, and were created by God, whether they existed before, or were themselves a part of the *hexameron*, or "six "days' work of God," described by Moses in the beginning of Genesis, was a question disputed among the ancient doctors, especially of the Greek church. But the latter part of the question, viz. That the angels were created sometime within the six days, is now unanimously asserted by the generality of modern divines, who produce very clear reasons for their opinion, from the very history of the creation delivered by Moses. For although Moses doth not therein tell us, on what particular day of the six the angels were made, yet that they were created sometime within the compass of those six days which preceded the seventh, wherein *God rested from all his work*, he seems plainly enough to teach us, Gen. ii. 1, 2. *Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them; and on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day, from all his work which he had made.* Where we have evidently a general recapitulation of all the six days' works of God, described in the foregoing chapter; and in that recapitulation, not only the heaven, but also *all the host of heaven*, is expressly mentioned.

Now what do other scriptures teach us to understand by *all the host of heaven?* The whole host of heaven consists of two parts, *the visible*, and *the intelligible host of heaven.* The *visible host of heaven*

are the *sun, moon,* and *stars,* those glorious lights of heaven which we behold with our eyes; for so they are called, Deut. xvii. 3. and in divers other places. The *intelligible host of heaven* are the *angels,* who are therefore frequently denoted by that appellation in the holy Scriptures. So 1 Kings xxii. 19. *I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand, and on his left.* So Psalm ciii. 20, 21. *Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless the Lord, all his hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure.* So Luke ii. 13. *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God,* &c. But there is a place of Scripture that comprehends both those notions of the heavenly host together, and seems to be a plain comment on the text of Moses: you may find it in the ninth chapter of the book of Nehemiah, ver. 6. *Thou, even thou art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host; the earth, and all things that are therein; the sea and all that is therein; and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.* Where by *the heaven of heavens* doubtless is meant the highest heaven, called by St. Paul *the third heaven.* And of this heaven, as well as of the inferior heavens, the starry and airy regions, it is said, that *God made them with all their host.* Now the *host of the heaven of heavens,* or the *highest heaven,* are certainly the *angels;* the *host of the heaven* next under it, the *sun, moon,* and *stars.* But that *the host of the heaven of heavens,* the *angels,* are chiefly respected here, appears from the last words of the

verse, *and the host of heaven worshippeth thee;* which in the proper sense (from which there is no reason here to depart) is true only of the angelical host of heaven. When therefore Moses in the place cited tells us, that within the *six days,* not only the earth with all things belonging thereunto, but also the heaven and *all the host* thereof were finished; we may with very great reason conclude, that he intended hereby to signify, that the *angels,* being a part, and the chief part, of the heavenly host, were also created within the compass of those six days; although in what day of the six he had not before expressly told us, as indeed it is no where else in Scripture revealed unto us.

And we have the greater reason thus to conclude, because that Moses himself knew of the *heaven of heavens,* or *the highest heaven,* as appears from Deut. x. 14. *Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, are the Lord's thy God; the earth also, with all that therein is.* And that the angels are God's host, we are taught by him also in this very book of Genesis, chap. xxxii. 1, 2. where he relates an apparition of angels to Jacob in these words, *And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him; and when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host.*

This is farther confirmed from what follows in the place above cited, out of the second chapter of Genesis, wherein, after it had been said that *the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them,* it is presently added, *and on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.* From whence it appears, that the

heaven and the earth, and all the host of them, said then to be finished, are to be understood in the most comprehensive latitude, as taking in all the work of God, *all that God hath made*, i. e. all creatures, and therefore angels, they being unquestionably God's creatures, as I shall presently shew you; now it is plain, that the angels are not comprehended under the earth, and the host thereof; and therefore they must be contained in the mention of the heavenly host.

The same thing is clearly taught us in the words of the fourth commandment of the Decalogue, delivered also by Moses, wherein it is expressly affirmed, that *in six days God made heaven and earth, and all that in them is*. Now if within the six days God made all things that are in heaven, then within that time he made the angels, who have their habitation there, and are therefore very frequently in Scripture reckoned with the things in heaven [b].

But yet we need not much contend about this matter. It is sufficient for us to know and believe (and so much we must believe) that the angels are creatures of God, made by the *eternal Word*, or *Son of God*, and receiving from him a beginning of being, before which they were not. This doctrine is most evidently delivered in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. In the 148th Psalm, after the Psalmist had invited all the things above, and among them the angels, to celebrate the divine

[b] [Yet the Book of Job says, xxxviii. 4, 7. that when God laid the foundations of the earth, all the *sons of God* shouted for joy: and if they were created during the six days, the time between their creation and the apostasy of some of them seems very short.]

praises, he presently adds concerning all of them alike, verse 5, *Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.* But most full is the text out of the New Testament, Col. i. 16, 17. *For by him* (i. e. the Son of God) *were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.* And concerning this, there hath been always a perfect agreement in the churches of Christ. Let us go on.

The angels were all created good and obedient to God, their and our supreme Lord. But divine revelation teacheth us, that some of them *sinned,* 2 Peter ii. 4. and *kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation,* Jude, verse 6. and so became of the most glorious and blessed, the most vile and miserable of all creatures. What the sin was whereby they fell, and when they fell, are questions very hard, if not impossible to be determined by any full and clear evidence of Scripture, and no way necessary for us to be resolved in; and therefore I think it best and safest to pass them by. Of this we are certain from holy writ, that there was a fallen angel before the fall of man, the Devil, the first and chiefest of fallen angels, being man's tempter, under the form of a serpent, and therefore called *the old serpent,* and *a murderer from the beginning,* Rev. xii. 9. and xx. 2. John viii. 44. We are certain also from Scripture, that there are now a great multitude of evil angels, joined in association with, and headed by that prince of darkness, and there-

fore called his angels, uniting their forces against God and goodness, and good men; enemies of mankind, troubling, disturbing, perverting, and corrupting this lower world, into which for their sin they are cast down from the regions of light and glory which they once possessed. Nay, the very heathens confessed this also, acknowledging bad as well as good genius's.

And the existence of those evil spirits is so evident from their evil operations in the world; in the *energumeni*, or persons possessed by them; in wizards and witches, their instruments, acknowledged by all ages and nations, and of which in our own age we have had some unquestionable instances; in their temptations on the minds of men, which are many times such, (especially that which is by divines called *tentatio horrenda*, "the temptation of blas-"phemous thoughts," abhorred by the person who is continually molested with them,) that it is very apparent they proceed from some external, invisible, wicked agent injecting them; in the open, visible, and palpable tyranny, which they exercise at this day in many parts of the world, where they are still worshipped. I say, that there are devils, or evil angels, is from hence so manifest, that he must needs be under a very strong and powerful delusion of the Devil that shall deny it.

But my business at present is not to treat of the evil spirits; the subject of the proposition in my text being the good and holy and blessed angels of God, who persisted, and do still persist, in that integrity wherein they were at first created. Wherefore beseeching God to deliver our souls and our bodies from the power and policy, from the violent assaults

and secret machinations, stratagems, and devices of those wicked apostate spirits, let us leave them, and proceed in our discourse of the good angels, and consider,

II. Secondly, the predicate of the proposition in my text, or what is affirmed concerning them, viz. that they are *all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation.* Whence we have, 1. The nature of the holy angels, they are *spirits.* 2. Their state and condition with reference to God, they are *ministering,* waiting, or serving *spirits.* 3. Their office with relation to us, they are *sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.*

1. Here is the nature of the angels of God described in this word πνεύματα, *spirits.* That is, they are not flesh and blood as we are, nor is their substance like any of those things that fall under our senses. Hence St. Paul, speaking of the enemies of our souls, the evil angels, (who differ not in their nature and essence, but only in the malice of their wills from the good angels,) saith, that *we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness* (or wicked spirits) *in high places,* Eph. vi. 12.

It is indeed most certain that the angels of God are not such spirits, as God, blessed for ever, is, i. e. they are not ὁμοούσιοι of the same nature and essence with God; for then they would be Gods and not creatures, as we have before proved them to be. But we cannot so certainly and positively tell what kind of spirituality that of the angels is, whether it be void of all manner of corporeity, as modern divines generally hold, or joined with some certain corpo-

reity, not of the grosser sort, either fleshly, or airy, or fiery, but most subtle and pure, like that of the highest heaven, which is styled their ἴδιον οἰκητήριον, their *proper habitation*, as some of the ancient doctors believed.

And indeed there is no necessity that we should be resolved in this matter. But this is most evident from the Scriptures, that of all created beings, the angels of God are the most subtle, defecate, pure, active, and so the most perfect and noble substances. Hence they are described in holy writ, as creatures of wonderful agility and swiftness of motion, Psalm civ. 4. therefore called *cherubim*, i. e. winged creatures; and of as strange a subtlety penetrating into any kind of bodies, yea insinuating themselves into and affecting the very inward senses of men, Acts xii. 8. Matt. ii. 19. 1 Sam. xvi. 15. As endowed with admirable efficacy and power, Psalm ciii. 20. 2 Kings xix. 35. And lastly, as immortal beings, that have no principles of corruption within themselves, as unalterable at least as the pure heaven where they dwell, that can never die or perish but by the hand of him that first gave them being, Luke xx. 36. This may suffice to have been spoken of the nature of the angels of God, of which we cannot hope to attain a clear and full knowledge, till we arrive to that blessed state, wherein, through the infinite grace and almighty power of God, we shall be made like unto them.

2. Let us next consider the state and condition of the holy angels with reference to God, signified by this, that they are styled λειτουργικὰ, *ministering*, i. e. waiting or serving, *spirits*. Ministering? to whom? not to us. For although they minister for

our good, (as shall be shewn when we come to the third particular,) yet they are not our ministers or servants, (this would be intolerable arrogance for us creeping worms on earth to imagine,) but God's. And God's ministers, servants, and vassals they are, as his creatures, owing their being and all that they have or are to his bounty, and thereby obliged to pay him all adoration, worship, service, and obedience. As high as they are in heaven, they do not sit upon the throne of the divine Majesty there, but stand before it, humbly attending and waiting to receive the commands of the universal King, as they are often described in the holy Scriptures. In a word, although the holy angels are the most excellent creatures, yet they are but creatures; and therefore we must not be so scared and dazzled with their excellence, as to fall down and worship them; but rather join with them in rendering all divine honour to the supreme God alone, to whom we are fellow-servants with them, although in a lower rank or station.

Hence the angel that appeared to St. John would not suffer him to fall down before him, for this reason, that he was his *fellowservant,* Rev. xxii. 8, 9. *And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the face of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.* Where three things are especially to be noted.

1. We may observe, that the angel styles himself the *fellowservant,* not only of St. John, and those other excellent men the prophets, (who by their of-

fice and extraordinary mission from God were themselves after a sort made angels of God,) but universally *of them which keep the sayings of this book*; i. e. of all faithful, all truly pious men. So that if the meanest sincere servant of Christ had been in St. John's room, and done as he did, the angel would after the same manner have refused the honour done him, and for the same reason, because he was his *fellowservant.*

2. It is to be remarked, that the reason in the text extends itself to all manner of religious worship, whereby we subject ourselves as servants to the holy angels, even to that lower degree of religious worship which the papists call *cultum duliæ*, " the wor- " ship of service." For this worship supposeth that we are servants to the angels; whereas the text expressly teacheth us, that we are not servants to them, but fellowservants with them to the supreme God, to whom alone therefore we ought with them to render all religious worship and service. And indeed it will be very evident to him that shall attentively consider the context, (especially the ninth verse of the preceding chapter, and the sixth verse of this,) that St. John all along did and could not but know the person that spake to him to be only an angel sent from God and his Son Christ, and not God the Father or Son himself; and therefore could not intend to give him that sort of religious worship which the Romanists call λατρείαν *worship*, in the most absolute and perfect sense of the word, consisting in an acknowledgment of infinite excellency in the person worshipped, and therefore acknowledged by all to be due to the supreme God alone; but only such a veneration, as, being as it were in a rapture,

he thought he might not unfitly give, to testify his honour and gratitude to so glorious a messenger from God, who shewed him such wonderful things, and brought him such welcome tidings. And yet even this kind of worship, when offered by St. John, the angel refused, as unfit and unsafe for himself to receive and the other to give; as apt, being used, by insensible degrees to withdraw and alienate the minds of men from the due veneration of the supreme God, blessed for ever.

3. We may here see the mind and disposition of the holy angels of God, that, in all their intercourses with the sons of men, they seek not their own honour, but the honour and glory of him that sends them; that then we please them best, and oblige them most, when they see us paying all religious worship and veneration to the blessed Trinity; and that on the other side, when we render any thing like that worship to themselves, we greatly offend and displease them.

The ancient church of Christ well understood this, though the degenerate church of Rome will not. For Origen [c], speaking the sense of the Christians in his time, in answer to Celsus, objecting the neglect of worshipping those spirits, that under God preside over affairs here below, as a faulty omission among Christians, tells him, "Although we know that not "devils, (such as you worship,) but angels, are ap- "pointed to take care of the increase of the earth, "and the generation of animals; we speak well of "them indeed, and proclaim them blessed, but yet "we give them not the honour due to God, because

[c] Orig. cont. Cels. VIII. p. 416. [§. 57. vol. I. p. 785.]

"neither God would have us to do so, nor they "themselves." And a few pages after[d], "There is "only one whose favour we are to seek, viz. the su- "preme God; and the only way to obtain his fa- "vour, is by prayer and virtuous living. If, next to "the supreme God, Celsus would have us to court "the good-will of those other powers that are under "him, let him consider, that as when the body "moves, its shadow moves with it; so when a man "hath obtained the favour of God, he consequently "hath all the angels and saints for his friends." This he saith, who in the same place presently after acknowledgeth, that "the angels are present at our "prayers, and pray with and for us;" which plainly shews, that he thought the concernment of the holy angels in our devotions no good argument for us to withdraw any of our prayers from God, and to impart them to those blessed spirits.

So likewise in another place of the same work of his[c], having acknowledged, that "the angels do one "while ascend to the highest heaven, and then again "descend to men, with a return of the divine bless- "ings," he presently subjoins, by way of caution, that "yet we are not to worship them;" adding this reason, "for all deprecations and prayers, and inter- "cessions and thanksgivings, are to be directed to the "supreme God, by the High Priest that is above all "angels, the living Word and God." If all prayers are to be directed to God the Father through his Son Christ, then no prayer is to be made to angels, or to God by them. But may we not call upon them to pray for us, and to do us those good offices to which

[d] P. 420. [§. 64. p. 789.] [c] Lib. V. p. 233. [§. 4. p. 579.]

we know they are appointed by God? No; not that neither. For he presently adds, that "we must not "dare to pray unto any but God alone, because he "alone is all-sufficient for us, through our Saviour "his Son; and because our piety towards God, and "our faith in his Son, is of itself sufficient to make "the holy angels propitious to us, and to do all good "offices for us," without our praying to them.

These places of Origen are so very express against all manner of veneration to the holy angels, that exceeds the thinking and speaking honourably of them, and revering their presence in our behaviour and conversation, that I cannot but wonder what should move the learned annotator[f] on him, to go about to shew, that Origen notwithstanding prayed to his guardian angel. For proof whereof, he cites a place out of the first Homily of Origen, upon Ezekiel, where are these words, *Veni angele, suscipe sermone conversum ab errore pristino,* &c. i. e. "Come angel, take the convert into thy custody," &c. But that this is a gross mistake, will appear to any man that shall carefully consult the place: for Origen there (if it be Origen and not his translator) directs his discourse to a convert to Christianity, coming to baptism, or newly baptized: "Thou wert "yesterday under the power of a devil, to-day thou "art in the custody of an angel[g]." And having cited some texts of Scripture to prove the ministry of angels over the faithful, by a rhetorical figure he introduceth the angels thus speaking among themselves, *Eia, omnes angeli descendamus e cœlo,* &c.

[f] Vid. Spenceri Notas ad lib. V. cont. Celsum, p. 233. lin. 33.

[g] Tu heri sub dæmonio eras, hodie sub angelo. [§. 7. vol. III. p. 358.]

"Come, let us angels all descend from heaven," to visit the sons of men, as the Son of God himself hath done. Then presently, continuing his rhetorical scheme, he adds, *Veni angele*, "Come angel, take "the convert into thy custody." So that it is very manifest, Origen doth not there pray to his own guardian angel, but only in a strain of rhetoric invites the angel of the new convert to Christianity, to receive him into his care and protection.

A like mistake Grotius is guilty of[h], who would persuade us that Origen, notwithstanding those plain declarations of his mind, was not against all religious worship and invocation of angels, because he in another place[i] tells Celsus, that it is perhaps lawful λατρεύειν *to worship* the good angels, provided the word *worshipping* be understood in a purged and sound sense. But what is that refined sense of the word, wherein he allows the angels to be worshipped? He partly tells us afterward, in the same book, in the place already cited[k], viz. as the word may signify εὐφημεῖν καὶ μακαρίζειν, "to think and "speak honourably of them, and to proclaim them "blessed." Add hereunto, (what Origen also in many other places observes,) that "we are in all our "actions, especially our religious actions, to revere "the presence of those holy inspectors over us, and "to take care we do nothing that may offend and "displease them," as hereafter shall be more fully shewn.

But as to the invocation of angels, to pray for us

[h] Grot. in Explicat. Decalogi ad Præcept. primum.

[i] Orig. cont. Cels. VIII. p. 386. [§. 13. p. 751.]

[k] P. 416. [p. 785.]

or help us, he every where universally rejects it, as neither pleasing to God nor the good angels themselves, nor agreeable to the practice of the church in his time.

One would think indeed, that there were no more hurt in praying to the angels to pray for us, they being ordinarily present with us here on earth, than for one Christian in this state of mortality, to desire the prayers of another in the same state, which is our common practice warranted by Scripture; but in truth, if we duly consider things, we shall find a vast disparity in these cases, as in many other respects, so especially in this.

When Christians conversing together on earth mutually desire the assistance of each other's prayers, they being by sense and experience thoroughly acquainted with their common humanity, and the frailty attending it, there is no danger of idolatry in the case; or that one should ascribe that to the other, which belongs to God alone. But if we mortal men were allowed to make such applications to the holy angels of God, the brightness of the acknowledged glory and excellence of their nature and office would be apt to dazzle the eyes of our minds, and consequently to fix our devotion on them, and withdraw it from God the fountain of blessings; especially when we see them not, and so must be forced to address ourselves to them with the same faith and abstraction of mind as we do to the invisible God. So likewise if we were permitted to have recourse to the mediation of angels in our necessities and distresses, we should upon the same account too easily place our trust and confidence in them, and be taken off from our due dependence on

the one only meritorious Mediator between God and man, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Sad experience and observation of things, where angel-worship is practised, assures us, that this is no vain imagination. Upon this account, among others, we are not allowed either by Scripture, or the custom of the church in the purest ages of it, to ask the prayers of angels, as we desire the prayers of one another. There is great danger in doing so, but no necessity at all of doing it. For we need not stir up the remembrance, or excite the charity of those blessed spirits that watch over us; who are of themselves always readily inclined to do us all the good offices they can; and the more ready, as they see us more intent on the service and worship of God in Christ, the promoting whereof is their great design and business here on earth. This is the plain sense of Origen, and of the Christians of his age.

A good while after Origen, Lactantius flourished, who discourses much to the same purpose, observing that the devils and evil spirits only seek for honour and worship from men; but that the good angels are averse from it, and will by no means admit of any religious honour or worship to be done unto them. "The angels," saith he, "though they are immortal, will not suffer themselves to be called Gods; "whose only office it is to be at God's beck, and to "do nothing at all but what he commands them. "Therefore they will have NO HONOUR given unto "themselves, whose honour is in God. But the "apostate spirits, being enemies to truth and sinners against God, endeavour to get unto themselves both the name and worship of Gods [1]."

[1] Lact. II. 17.

In short, there is not one text in the Scriptures of the New Testament to warrant angel-worship; but on the contrary, we have a very plain prohibition of it, not only in the particular case of St. John, but generally delivered by St. Paul, Col. ii. 18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen,* &c. Where the worshipping of angels condemned, being joined with voluntary humility, plainly enough signifies such worship of angels, as is performed under colour of humility, that is with this pretence, that it is a kind of presumption in us vile sinners to make our addresses immediately to the supreme God by his eternal Son; and that therefore we ought in modesty to apply ourselves to the angels, the heavenly ministers, and by their merits and intercession to convey our petitions to the great King of heaven. And who sees not, that this is the very same angel-worship which the papists at this day practise and defend, and that under the same colour and pretence?

And if we look to the ancient church for at least three hundred years after Christ, it is evident from the testimonies of Origen and Lactantius but now cited, (the former writing about the middle of the third, the other in the beginning of the fourth century,) that there was no such thing as angel-worship in those days among the catholics. And for our farther confirmation it is to be observed, that in the Clementine Liturgy [m], (so called,) which is by the learned on all hands confessed to be very ancient,

[m] Apost. Constitut. lib. VIII.

and to contain the order of worship observed in the eastern churches before the times of Constantine, there is not one prayer to be found, from the beginning to the end of it, made either to angel or saint; (no not so much as any such prayer as this, O Michael, O Gabriel, or O Peter, O Paul, pray for us;) but all the prayers are directed to God in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, as they are (God be praised) in our Liturgy.

So that if the plain doctrine of the holy Scriptures, and the declared sense of the primitive purest churches of Christ, are to be regarded, we are certain, both that we ourselves are safe in not worshipping the angels of God, and that they of the church of Rome sin and err greatly in their practice of such worship.

And so much of the second particular contained in the predicate of the proposition in my text, viz. The state and condition of the holy angels with reference to God. They are ministering spirits, servants with us to the supreme God, and therefore not to be worshipped by us with religious worship; no not with that lower sort of religious worship, which consists in praying unto them to recommend our prayers to Almighty God.

And if we must not make any such religious addresses to the holy angels, then certainly not to the saints departed. For besides that there is no warrant either in Scripture or the practice of the primitive church, for the invocation of saints, any more than of angels, as hath been already intimated; we may also, from what hath been said against the worship of angels, farther argue with advantage against the invocation of saints, thus: The saints departed

are not yet equal to angels, nor shall be till the resurrection, and then they shall, as our Saviour teacheth us, Luke xx. 36; if therefore we must not make any religious application by way of prayer to the angels, as excellent creatures as they are, then much less to the saints departed. Again, we are sure from Scripture, that the angels are *ex officio* by their office ordinarily to be present with, and to attend upon, the faithful here on earth, as shall be more fully shewn in the sequel of this subject; and yet if we regard either the holy Scriptures, or the sense of the primitive church, we may not, we must not pray unto them; what reason can there be then for the invocation of the saints deceased, of whom the holy Scriptures give us not the least assurance, that they are ordinarily present with us, nay in divers places seem not obscurely to teach the directly contrary?

I shall now proceed to the third and last thing affirmed of the angels, concerning their office with relation to us: that *they are sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation;* but that subject I shall leave to another opportunity.

Now to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, adoration and worship, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XII.

THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY ANGELS IN REFERENCE TO GOOD MEN; BEING APPOINTED BY GOD AS THE MINISTERS OF HIS SPECIAL PROVIDENCE TOWARDS THE FAITHFUL; AND WHEREIN THE ANGELICAL MINISTRY DOTH MORE ESPECIALLY CONSIST.

HEB. i. 14.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

IN the entrance of my former discourse on this text I observed, that the negative interrogation or question therein propounded is equivalent to this strong affirmative proposition, *That the holy angels of God are questionless all of them ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.*

In which proposition I considered, first, the subject, or persons spoken of, the holy angels. Where I proved, even by cogent reasons, that there are such noble beings as we call angels; and that they are very certainly creatures of God, most probably created sometime within those six days of the creation described by Moses in the beginning of Genesis, though on which of those six days the holy Scriptures nowhere plainly inform us.

In considering the predicate of the proposition, or what is therein affirmed of the holy angels, I have

first discoursed of their nature, that they are *spirits;* and then of their state and condition with reference to God, that they are *ministering* or serving *spirits,* doing homage with us to the supreme God and Lord of all things, and therefore by no means religiously to be worshipped by us.

It remains that I now proceed to the third and last particular in the second part of my text, concerning the office of the holy angels in relation to us, viz. *That they are sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.*

This is to us the most useful part of the text, and therefore the more accurately and carefully to be considered by us.

The holy angels are spirits, ἀποστελλόμενα, sent from heaven above into this earth; what to do? Chiefly to minister to, or to do all good offices, both corporal and spiritual, *for them who shall be heirs of salvation,* i. e. all truly faithful persons continuing such.

The providence of God in the government of this lower world, and therein more especially of the children of men, and most especially of those who love and fear him, is in great part administered by the holy angels: these, as Philo terms them, are "the "ears and eyes of the universal King[a]." The expression alludes to the government of earthly monarchs, who have their deputies or lieutenants in all parts of their dominion, who are, as it were, the eyes by which they see, and the hands by which they act. Not as if God needed the help of angels to oversee and act those things which his own knowledge and

[a] Ὦτα καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ Παμβασιλέως.

power cannot reach to, for he is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent; but this is spoken of God, *ἀνθρωπικῶς, after the manner of men*, and must be understood, *θεοπρεπῶς, in a sense becoming the majesty of God*. The rulers of this world have their deputies out of necessity, because they cannot govern without them: but the universal King hath his ministers out of choice, because he is pleased for very good reasons to make use of them.

But as to Philo's expression, it seems to be borrowed from the holy Scriptures, wherein the angels of God are expressly termed *the eyes of the Lord*[b]. So 2 Chron. xvi. 9. *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew themselves strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him*. Indeed our translators here read *himself*; but there is no such word in the Hebrew, and the supply might as well have been made by the word *themselves*; yea, so it ought to be made, if we will make sense of the words, with reference to *the eyes of the Lord* in the plural number preceding. However, that by *the eyes of the Lord* in that text are meant angels of God, is otherwise plain enough from the words themselves, which clearly express the every employment constantly attributed to the holy angels in Scripture, of being sent, *and running to and fro through the earth*, to exercise their power in the protection and security of good and upright men. And the same is farther evident from other parallel texts of Scripture. In the fourth chapter of the prophecy of Zechariah, verse 2, we have a vision of seven lamps in a golden candlestick. The inter-

[b] [Part of this and the following page is repeated nearly word for word in Sermon XIX.]

pretation of which vision is thus given, verse 10. *Those seven, they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro throughout the whole earth.* Now what those seven eyes of the Lord are, we learn clearly from St. John, Rev. v. 6. where we have a vision of the Lamb, *having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth;* and those spirits he terms *angels*, chap. viii. 2. *I saw the seven angels which stood before God.* So again, Rev. i. 4. we read of *seven spirits which are before God's throne*, i. e. wait in his presence, do not sit upon, but stand before his throne, ready to receive his commands, and are therefore undoubtedly created spirits, i. e. angels.

For the understanding of which places we are to know, that the ancient Jews believed, that among the holy angels, those eyes of God and instruments of his watchful providence over us, there are seven (whereby perhaps they meant no more than a certain determinate number of) principal angels, as it were chief captains and commanders of the whole heavenly host. So in the ancient, though apocryphal book of Tobit, chap. xii. 15. the angel Raphael is brought in thus speaking to Tobit and his son: *I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels,—— which go in and out before the glory of the holy One.* And that this was no vain speculation of the Jews, appears from those texts of canonical Scripture, both of the Old and New Testament, which we have but now produced. But this by the way; I proceed.

That the holy angels are appointed by God, as the ministers of his special providence over the faithful, is plainly asserted in very many places of Scrip-

ture besides my text. So Psalm xxxiv. 7. *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* So Psalm xci. 9—12. *Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.* Yea, our Lord himself assures us, that his little ones, those that imitate the innocence and humility of little children, i. e. all truly good men, have their angels in heaven to protect and defend them; and that therefore it is a very dangerous thing for any man to injure or offend them, Matt. xviii. 10.

It is true indeed the good angels do not now ordinarily appear in visible forms, or speak by audible voices to men, as in ancient times they did. After God had once spoken unto men by his own Son, manifested in the flesh, and by him fully revealed his will to the world, and confirmed that revelation by a long succession of unquestionable miracles, there was no such need of angelical appearances, for the instruction, confirmation, and consolation of the faithful. The succeeding ages do indeed afford us very credible relations of some such apparitions now and then; but ordinarily, I say, the government of angels over us is now administered in a secret and invisible manner. Hence too too many have been inclined either flatly to deny, or at least to call in question, the truth of the doctrine we are now upon. But they have souls very much immersed in flesh, who can apprehend nothing but what touches and affects

their senses; and they that follow this gross and sensual way of procedure, must at last necessarily fall into downright epicurism, to deny all particular providence of God over the sons of men, and to ascribe all events to those causes that are next to them.

But besides, although the ministry of angels be now for the most part invisible, yet to the observant it is not altogether indiscernible.

We may trace the footsteps of this secret providence over us in many instances, of which I shall note a few. How often may we have observed strong, lasting, and irresistible impulses upon our minds to do certain things we can scarce for the present tell why or wherefore, the reason and good success of which we afterwards plainly see? So, on the contrary, there are ofttimes sudden and unexpected accidents, as we call them, cast in our way, to divert us from certain enterprises we are just ready to engage in, the ill consequences whereof we do afterwards, but not till then, apprehend. Again, *Quantum est in subitis casibus ingenium!* "How "strange many times are our present thoughts and "suggestions in sudden and surprising dangers!" We then upon the spot resolve and determine as well as if we had a long time deliberated, and taken the best advice and counsel; and we ourselves afterwards wonder how such thoughts came into our minds. Hither also we may refer that lucky conspiracy of circumstances, which we sometimes experience in our affairs and business, otherwise of great difficulty; when we light upon the τὸ νῦν, or *nick of opportunity;* when the persons, whose counsel or assistance we most need, strangely occur, and

all things fall out according to our desire, but beyond our expectation. What strange ominous abodings and fears do many times on a sudden seize upon men of certain approaching evils, whereof at present there is no visible appearance! And have we not had some unquestionable instances of men not inclined to melancholy, strongly and unalterably persuaded of the near approach of their death, so as to be able punctually to tell the very day of it, when they have been in good health, and neither themselves nor their friends could discern any present natural cause for such a persuasion, and yet the event hath proved, that they were not mistaken? And although I am no doter on dreams, yet I verily believe, that some dreams are monitory, above the power of fancy, and impressed on us by some superior influence. For of such dreams, we have plain and undeniable instances in history, both sacred and profane, and in our own age and observation. Nor shall I so value the laughter of sceptics, and the scoffs of the Epicureans, as to be ashamed to profess, that I myself have had some convincing experiments of such impressions. Now it is no enthusiasm, but the best account that can be given of them, to ascribe these things to the ministry of those invisible instruments of God's providence, that guide and govern our affairs and concerns, viz. the angels of God.

However it is most certain, that the holy angels are appointed by divine Providence as the guardians of good men (as, and whilst they are such) in all their ways, and throughout the whole course of their lives. For of this, as you have heard, the holy Scriptures (to which we have all the reason in the world to give credit) often and most expressly

speak; and the wiser heathens themselves acknowledged as much, though they called those blessed instruments of God's providence over the virtuous by other names than we do, as by that of *boni genii*, "good genius's," and the like, as hath been before observed.

This theme of the angelical ministry is indeed very pregnant, and hath administered abundant matter to exercise the more curious wits, who have raised very many questions about it of more subtlety than profit.

But for my own part, being truly conscious to myself of my infirmity, and believing that what I discourse at this time of the ministry of the holy angels, I deliver in the presence of some of those heavenly ministers, I shall be very careful to keep myself within the bounds of modesty and sobriety. But there are three questions here, which I think may with some profit be discussed, and cannot well be passed over in silence. 1. Whether the office of ministering on earth, for the good of the faithful, belongs to the holy angels universally, even those of the highest order, or only to some certain angels of the inferior orders? 2. Whether every faithful person, during his life on earth, hath his particular guardian angel more constantly to preside and watch over him? 3. Wherein the angelical ministry, for the good of the faithful on earth, doth more especially consist? Of these questions I shall, by God's assistance, discourse in order, with all due reverence, and as the time will permit.

Quest. 1. Whether the office of ministering on earth, for the good of the faithful, belongs to the holy angels universally, even those of the highest

order, or only to some certain angels of the inferior orders?

Aquinas and his followers, being led by the authority of the counterfeit Dionysius, and some texts of Scripture that seem to favour him, have distinguished *inter assistentes et ministrantes angelos*, between those superior angels that always stand before the throne of God in heaven, and those inferior angels that are sent forth, as need requires, to minister for the faithful on earth. Which distinction being admitted, it follows, that some of the principal angels are wholly exempted from that ministry of which we are now discoursing.

Not to take any notice again of Dionysius, the places of Scripture on which this opinion is founded are those wherein it is said of certain angels, that *they always behold the face of God* in heaven, Matt. xviii. 10. and *stand before God*, Dan. vii. 9, 10. Rev. viii. 2. And to these texts of Scripture the patrons of this opinion add a reason or argument, drawn from the order of nature and grace, which, as they say, the angelical polity constantly retain and observe. According to which order the inferior angels are always illuminated and instructed by the superior concerning those things that are to be done here below. So that the superior angels never go forth themselves by external mission, but only give the orders they have received from God to the inferior angels that minister under them, to be executed by them on earth.

But notwithstanding these fair colours put upon this opinion, we can by no means admit of it; but on the contrary we affirm, that although commonly and ordinarily the inferior angels are the immediate

instruments of the divine Providence over the faithful on earth; yet sometimes, extraordinarily and by the divine dispensation, the superior angels also, even those of the highest order, are themselves sent forth by external mission to minister for the good of the faithful here below. For the negative interrogation in my text, which I have already noted to be equivalent to a vehement affirmation, is universal and unlimited, *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth*, &c.

And it is farther to be observed, that the manifest scope of the divine author in this chapter is to assert the preeminence of the Son of God, not above some certain inferior angels only, but over the angels universally, even those of the highest order and dignity. And among the proofs hereof alleged by him, this is one and the last, that whereas the Scripture speaks of the Son, as *sitting on the throne of God the Father, at his right hand*, and so as copartner with him in the divine empire; the angels all of them are confessedly *ministering spirits, sent forth* at God's pleasure to execute his commands on earth. As certain therefore as it is, that the Son of God is superior to all the angels, none excepted; so certain is it, that all the angels, without exception, are *ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for* the faithful on earth. This latter being the medium or argument whereby the divine author proves the former.

As for those texts of Scripture wherein it is said of certain angels, that they *stand before God*, they are of no force to prove that for which they are alleged, but rather prove the contrary. For *to stand before God* in those places, doth not signify that the

angels who are said so to do always stand still in heaven, exempt from all ministerial offices here on earth, but rather serves to express their ministerial function. The phrase is metaphorical, and signifies no more than to appear, or be ready at hand, to serve another; as princes and magistrates have their officials attending them, to receive and execute their commands. Hence those very Scriptures that speak of certain angels, as *standing before God*, do plainly tell us, that those very angels are sent from heaven to earth, upon certain embassies and ministries committed to them. So the angel Gabriel, who appeared to Zechariah in the temple upon the most weighty occasion of revealing to him the near approach of the coming of the Messias, and of his forerunner John the Baptist, who was to be born of his wife Elizabeth, tells him at the same time, *I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings*, Luke i. 19. And presently after, in the same chapter, the same angel is said to have been sent, and appeared to the blessed Virgin, of whom the Messias himself was to be born, verse 26, 27. So those seven principal angels or spirits of God, that are said in the Revelation of St. John *to stand before God*, are nevertheless in the same book said to be the *seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth*, chap. v. 6. And one of them, St. John seems to say, was *sent to himself*, chap. xvii. 1.[c]

And then for the reason or argument to prove the exemption of the superior angels from ministering

[c] [See also Job i. 6. 1 Kings xxii. 19.]

here below, taken from the order established and observed among the angels, according to which the superior angels act by the inferior, and the inferior under them, it is easily answered. For though this order be ordinarily kept and observed, as hath been before acknowledged, yet this hinders not, but that sometimes, and upon extraordinary occasions, it may be dispensed with. The order both of nature and grace among the holy angels is subservient to the kingdom of Christ; and when any grand affair of that kingdom requires, it may be altered. And if the Son of God himself once vouchsafed to come down from heaven, being sent by his Father, and to be "incarnate for us men, and for our salvation;" it cannot be thought beneath the dignity of the most excellent angel to be sent by God from heaven, to do good offices for men on earth. And this may suffice to have been spoken to the first question; I proceed to the next.

Quest. 2. Whether every faithful person, during his life on earth, hath his particular guardian angel, more constantly to preside and watch over him?

I answer, The affirmative hath been a received opinion, and seems to be confirmed by some very considerable texts of Scripture.

1. It is an opinion that hath been entertained in former ages with a general consent, both among Jews and Christians, as hath been observed and fully proved by learned men [d]; nay, the very heathens too had such a notion among them, though perhaps they went too far, assigning to every man his good genius universally. Thus Menander, "Every man, as

[d] Vide Petav. [De Angelis II. 6. &c. vol. III. ed. 1700.]

"soon as he is born, hath his genius to attend and "assist him, as the good guide of his after-life [e]." And Arrianus upon Epictetus, speaking of God, saith [f], "He hath given to every man his peculiar "genius, as his keeper or guardian, to whose custody "he is delivered; and that a watchful guardian, "that cannot by any means be withdrawn from the "faithful discharge of his office."

2. As this opinion hath been generally received among Jews, Christians, and heathens, so it seems to be favoured by divers texts of Scripture. I shall take notice of some of them, as the time will permit.

In the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew, ver. 10. our Saviour cautions all men to take heed, *how they offend* [g] *any of his little ones that believe on him;* subjoining this reason of that caution, *For I say unto you, their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.* They have their guardian angels to assist them, and to avenge all injuries done unto them; and therefore take heed how you offend them. The main force of the proof lies in the pronoun *αὐτῶν*, THEIR *angels*, which plainly intimates, that all Christ's little ones who believe in him, i. e. all humble and faithful persons, have their proper angels assigned to them, as their guardians and protectors. And besides, we are to consider, (what the learned Grotius seasonably advises,) that

[e "Απαντι δαίμων ἀνδρὶ συμπαρίσταται
Εὐθὺς γενομένῳ μυσταγωγὸς τοῦ βίου
Ἀγαθός.]

[f] Καὶ ἐπίτροπον ἑκάστῳ παρέστησε τὸν ἑκάστου δαίμονα, καὶ παρέδωκε φυλάσσειν αὐτὸν αὐτῷ, καὶ τοῦτον ἀκοίμητον καὶ ἀπαραλόγιστον. [I. 14.]

[g] [Despise.]

the persons to whom our Saviour spake these words were Jews, and consequently that the words ought to be interpreted in such a sense, as may correspond with their conceptions and apprehensions. Now it is certain, (as I have already noted,) that the Jews generally believed every good man to have his genius or guardian angel more constantly to watch over him.

Another text, which seems plainly to countenance the opinion of guardian angels, is that known one in the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where we read, that St. Peter having been imprisoned by Herod, and being miraculously delivered out of prison by an angel, presently comes *to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many* Christians were met together unto prayer, and probably praying for St. Peter's deliverance; coming to this house, and knocking and desiring entrance, the maid that came to the door hearing and knowing his voice, and being surprised with joy and wonder at his unexpected coming, left the door shut as it was, and running back to the company, tells them that Peter was at the door. But they being persuaded that Peter was at that time fast enough in his chains, slighted the maid's report, yea and accused her of madness. But she soberly and constantly affirming, that it was even so as she had said; they then (supposing it impossible it should be Peter himself) make this conclusion, *It is his angel,* i. e. his guardian angel, assuming at that time his shape and voice. The whole story you may read, ver. 12—16. of that chapter.

They who tell us here that the word ἄγγελος may

be translated *a messenger*, and so be understood of a messenger sent by St. Peter from his prison, to give the brethren intelligence of his concerns, do, in my judgment, fasten an intolerably absurd sense upon the text. For with what reason, I beseech you, could those Christians imagine, that the maid, to whom the apostle was so well known, (as the text itself expressly affirms,) should mistake a messenger from Peter, for Peter himself, especially after the maid had so positively and constantly affirmed, that she was sure it was Peter. Besides, if the Christian brethren, when they made this conclusion, *It is his angel*, had meant only that it was a messenger from St. Peter, they would doubtless have presently either gone themselves, or sent the maid again to the door, to let in the messenger, that they might know what news he brought from the apostle, about whom they were so solicitous. But this they did not, as the text plainly intimates, being under a consternation, till after the continual knocking of St. Peter; and then they took courage to go themselves and open the door.

Lastly, It is here again to be remembered, that the persons who spoke these words, *It is his angel*, were Jews, and consequently that the words are to be understood as spoken *ex sententiâ Judæorum*, in a sense agreeable to the opinion of the Jews, who generally acknowledged such guardian angels, as hath been already more than once observed. This opinion they retained, after they had been taught the doctrine of Christianity; nor doth the holy text reflect any the least blame upon their opinion.

To these two texts out of the New, I shall add a third out of the Old Testament. It is in the fifth

chapter of Ecclesiastes, where the Wise Man, having declared the necessity of keeping all those lawful vows which we have once made unto God, how inconvenient soever they may afterwards appear to be, verse 4, 5, he enforceth what he had said, verse 6, in these words, *Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou* BEFORE THE ANGEL, *It was an error; wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?* Where we have two very strong arguments to dissuade us from violating those vows we have once made to God; and an answer to an excuse which men commonly make to palliate that sin. The first argument is drawn from the danger of bringing thereby the judgment of God on our family, in these words, *Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin*, i. e. (say some very learned interpreters, and I think most probably,) Do not, by making vows which thou afterwards violatest, bring sin, or the punishment of sin, upon thy children or posterity, which are thine one flesh. The second argument is taken from the curse which will certainly fall upon the estate of the offender in this kind, *Wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?* As if he had said, What a folly and madness is it in thee by uttering a vow with thy voice, which thou afterwards breakest in thy practice, to provoke Almighty God to destroy and blast that estate which was gotten by the work of thy hands, and is the fruit of thy labour! But because men are apt notwithstanding to excuse this grievous sin, by pretending that they were in an error, and did not well consider what they did when they made their vow; the Wise Man therefore obviates this ex-

cuse in these words: *Neither say thou before the angel, It was an error;* i. e. Do not seek out excuses to lessen thy fault; the angel of God was present when thou solemnly madest thy vow, and takes notice of thy breach of it, and shall be the instrument of the divine justice in punishing it.

Here we have *the angel* in the singular number, not *the angels* in the plural, to denote some one certain angel; and then this angel is described, as the angel before whom and in whose presence the person vowing is, as the inspector and observer of his words and actions; which gives us the plain notion of a guardian angel. And, by the way, we may farther observe from this text, that it belongs to the office of our guardian angel, not only to secure us from dangers, but to inspect and govern our actions, yea, and if need be, to chastise us when we transgress and prevaricate.

From these and the like texts of Scripture, seeming so plainly to favour the general belief of Jews, Christians, yea and of the wiser heathens; I cannot but judge it highly probable, that every faithful person at least hath his particular good genius or angel, appointed by God over him, as the guardian and guide of his life. But yet, if any man shall look on our inferences from those texts as not demonstrative, and shall modestly doubt of or dissent from so received an opinion, for my part I shall not quarrel with him, provided that in general he acknowledges the ministry of angels, for the good of those who *shall be heirs of salvation,* as need shall require.

This is a truth by all means not only firmly to be

believed, but also seriously to be considered, as being of great use and concernment to us. And so I pass to the third and last question propounded.

Quest. 3. Wherein the angelical ministry for the good of the faithful on earth doth more especially consist?

Answ. The ministry of the holy angels towards the children of God for their good and benefit, is in all respects opposed to the attempts of the Devil and his wicked angels against them for their hurt and detriment. The devils spring their mines of mischief against good men, but the good angels countermine them. This opposition of the good against the evil angels, with reference to the faithful, is observable especially in these four things.

1. They continually watch over good men to preserve and keep them from corporal and outward evils and dangers, and to promote their temporal good. This the divine Psalmist seems especially to have respect unto in those words of his, Psalm xci. 10, 11, 12. *There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.* So on the contrary, the wicked angels lie in wait to do hurt and mischief even to the bodies and temporal concerns of the faithful; as it plainly appears in Satan's dealing with Job: on whose sheep and servants he sent a fire out of the air to consume them; stirred up the Sabæans and Chaldæans to plunder his oxen, asses, and camels, and to kill his servants; raised a tempest to blow down his house and destroy his chil-

dren; afflicted his body with grievous blotches and boils, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head; and would, if God would have given him leave, have proceeded so far as to the taking away the life itself of that excellent person, Job i. 12.

The care and vigilance of the angels of light is employed in a direct opposition to these mischievous designs of the powers of darkness. They study to preserve and promote even the temporal safety, health and wealth, peace and prosperity of the faithful. This we may learn again from the case of Job, before God thought fit by way of trial to permit the Devil to afflict him; Satan then observed and envied his outward security and felicity, as appears from those words of his to God concerning him, Job i. 9, 10. *Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.* The good man was then so fenced and secured on every side, in his person, goods, and relations, by the angels of God encamping round about him, that all the power, policy, and malice of the Devil could not make a breach upon either of them, till God himself prepared the way for him.

In short, God may and doth sometimes so far withdraw his guard of holy angels from the faithful, as to permit the Devil to invade their temporal concerns; either for the exercise of their virtue, as in the case of Job, or for the prevention of their sin, as in the case of St. Paul, who had *a thorn in his flesh, the messenger of Satan*, i. e. a sharp painful disease inflicted by Satan, with God's leave, on his body to

keep him humble, 2 Cor. xii. 7. or by way of punishment of some past great sin of theirs, which God will have them smart for in this world that they may not utterly perish in the world to come.

And happy is the man that gets to heaven at last, though the Devil himself hath a hand, unwillingly, in driving him thither. It is a noble expression of the holy apostolic bishop and martyr Ignatius to this purpose in his Epistle to the Romans[h]: "Let the "punishment of the Devil come upon me, provided "only I may obtain Jesus Christ."

But ordinarily, and excepting these cases, even the bodily and outward concerns of good men are secured by the ministry of the holy angels. This indeed is not their main business, their ministry being chiefly designed for the heirs of salvation as such, i. e. to promote especially their salvation, and their future eternal happiness. St. John, in his salutation to the churches of Asia, wisheth them grace and peace, i. e. all spiritual as well as temporal good things, yea spiritual good things especially; not only from God the Father, as the fountain of them, and from Jesus Christ, as the only meritorious Mediator, who hath obtained them for us; but also from the seven spirits or chief angels that are before the throne of God, as instruments of divine Providence in dispensing both spiritual and temporal good things to the sons of men. Wherefore let us proceed to the other methods of the angelical ministry, more directly tending to our spiritual good and the salvation of our souls.

[h] Κόλασις τοῦ διαβόλου ἐπ' ἐμὲ ἐρχέσθω, μόνον ἵνα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐπιτύχω. P. 59. ed. Vossii. [Coteler reads κακαὶ κολάσεις τοῦ διαβόλου εἰς ἐμὲ ἐρχέσθωσαν, μόνον κ. τ. λ. §. 5. p. 28.]

2. The good angels suggest to the faithful good thoughts and affections, and excite them to good works and actions. For as the evil spirits make it their business to inject evil thoughts into the minds of men, and to lay before them the occasions of sin; so, on the contrary, we need not doubt but that the good angels are as sedulous to put good motions into the faithful, to frustrate the snares of Satan, and to stir them up to good works; Satan put it into the heart of Judas to betray his Lord and Master, John xiii. 27. Satan filled the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to commit sacrilege, Acts v. 3. And in general it is said of the Devil, that *he is the spirit that worketh* IN *the children of disobedience,* Eph. ii. 2. Now have the evil angels this power over the thoughts of men for evil, and shall we think that the good angels have not as great an influence over them for good? or have the good angels less will to incline men to goodness, than the evil angels have to draw them to wickedness? Certainly no.

Indeed the eternal uncreated Spirit of God alone, the Holy Ghost, is the author of our sanctification, the infuser of the principle of divine life into us, who only is able to overrule our wills, to penetrate the deepest secrets of our hearts, and to rectify our most inward faculties. But yet the good angels may and often do, as instruments of the divine goodness, powerfully operate upon our fancies and imaginations, and thereby prompt us to pious thoughts, affections, and actions. There is no man exercised in the ways of religion but must have observed, that ofttimes on a sudden, he knows not how, most vigorous, powerful, affecting thoughts of eternity and

the great concerns of religion have seized and possessed his soul; such affecting thoughts, as at other times, when he composeth and sets himself to think of those matters, he cannot without very great difficulty, if at all, command and retrieve. He hath observed also, that some times, when his thoughts have been employed and busied about quite other matters, he hath suddenly been called to his prayers, or minded and powerfully instigated to some good work to be done by him. For my part, I question not but that much of this is to be attributed to the ministry of the holy angels.

3. When the evil angels more violently assault the faithful by their temptations, the good angels presently step in, to succour, aid, and assist them, that they sink not under these temptations.

Our Saviour, *who was in all points tempted like us we are, yet without sin,* Heb. iv. 15. is our example in this. He was tempted in the wilderness in a very astonishing manner, the Devil violently seizing his body, and hurrying it up to a pinnacle of the temple, and then again into an exceeding high mountain, and impetuously assaulting his mind with the most horrid temptations to tempt God, to commit idolatry, and the worst sort of it, the worship of the Devil himself. But the good angels were all the while ready at hand, and, when they saw their time, appeared and *ministered to him,* as we read Matt. iv. 11. *Then the Devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.* It is true the good angels seem not by those words to have come in to our Saviour, till after he had single and alone vanquished all the assaults of the Devil; because they knew his virtue to be impregnable, and in no

danger of being overcome by temptations so foul and horrid. But yet as man, and in the state of humiliation, he was subject to the pure natural infirmities of mankind; and therefore needed food for his body after so long an abstinence, and refreshment to his mind after so dismal a conflict with the Devil: for both these purposes we may well suppose the good angels came and ministered to him. They *ministered to him,* when tempted by the Devil, all needful help and aid, and so they will to all the faithful his members, who as they stand in need of a more timely assistance of God's holy angels in their temptations, so they shall never fail to receive it.

Our Saviour again a little before his death was in a most dreadful agony; his *soul being exceeding sorrowful,* the anguish of his mind overflowing the channels of his body, and causing him *to sweat great drops of blood,* Mark xiv. 34. Luke xxii. 44. There is little reason to doubt, but that Satan had some hand in this last anguish of our Saviour. For we must not think that the Devil, after he had tempted our Lord in the wilderness, so left him as never to return again to trouble him more. Nay, St. Luke expressly obviates this conceit, when he tells us, the Devil then *departed from him for a season,* Luke iv. 13. If he then departed from him only *for a season,* we may be sure that this was not his last assault upon our Saviour. He set upon him again afterwards, but especially and in the most pressing manner (as is most probable) in his last agony in the garden. But, behold, then *there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him,* as St. Luke assures us, chap. xxii. 43.

4. And lastly, The good angels take notice of the prayers and good works of good men on earth, and report, commemorate, and represent them before God in heaven. Just as, on the contrary, the Devil watches our sins and miscarriages, and is ready to charge us with them, and is therefore said to be *the accuser of the brethren, accusing them before God day and night*[i], Rev. xii. 10. In the book of Tobit, (a book though not canonical yet very ancient, and always of good esteem in the church of God, nor do I find that the truth of the story therein contained was ever denied by the ancient Jews or Christians,) the angel Raphael, revealing himself to Tobit, tells him, chap. xii. 12. *et seq. When thou didst pray, and Sarah thy daughter-in-law, I did bring the remembrance of your prayers before the holy One: and when thou didst bury the dead, I was with thee likewise. And when thou didst not delay to rise up and leave thy dinner, to go and cover the dead, thy good deed was not hid from me, but I was with thee.——I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the holy One.* However, that the doctrine of the angels reporting and representing our prayers and good works in the court of heaven is not apocryphal, is most certain.

In the Revelation of St. John, chap. viii. 3, 4. we read, *And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden*

[i] Ὁ κατήγορος τῶν ἀδελφῶν.

altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. Where Beza himself acknowledgeth, that by the angel is not meant Christ, (as some interpreters would persuade us, contrary to the plain sense of the text, especially if compared with its parallel text, chap. v. 8.) but a created angel; it being a part of the angelical ministry "to offer our "prayers unto God daily[k]." To offer them? How? Not as mediators and intercessors, adding virtue to our prayers from their merits; for this belongs to our Saviour Christ alone, the only meritorious Mediator between God and man; (whence the incense perfuming the prayers of the saints is expressly noted to be given to the angel from another, not to be his own;) but as messengers relating and reporting our prayers before God; which is expressed in the place cited out of the book of Tobit, by the phrase of *bringing the remembrance of our prayers before the holy One.*

So that these texts make not at all for the invocation of angels as our intercessors and advocates with God, as the Romanists foolishly imagine; nay, they make plainly against it.

For, 1. The prayers in those places, said to be presented by the angels, are not prayers directed to the angels themselves, but prayers to God alone.

2. The angel in Tobit expressly advises him to pray unto and praise God only, and professedly disclaims whatever might be thought due to his merit or interest in the whole transaction, and declares

[k] Preces nostras Deo quotidie offerre.

himself no farther concerned, from first to last, than as *God's servant and messenger*, ver. 17, 18. *And he said unto them, Fear not, for it shall go well with you; praise God therefore. For not of any favour of mine, but by the will of our God, I come; wherefore praise him for ever:* And accordingly, as we find in the next chapter, Tobit presently addressed himself not to the angel, but to God alone, as he had always used to do, in a very excellent and devout form of prayer and thanksgiving.

But having said enough in my former discourse on this text, against the invocation of angels, I proceed.

From what our Saviour tells us, that *there is joy*, ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων, *in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth*, Luke xv. 10. it is plain, that the prayers and tears of the penitent are soon reported in the court of heaven among the holy angels; and by whom can we conceive the report to be made, but by some of their own blessed society, carrying the welcome news from earth to heaven? So when the angel told Cornelius, that *his prayers and alms were come up for a memorial before God*, Acts x. 4. we may reasonably suppose, that the angel who told him so, was the very person that *brought the remembrance of his prayers and alms before the holy One*, to use again the phrase of the angel to Tobit, exactly answering to the speech of the angel to Cornelius.

Thus the holy angels of God are the observers of our prayers and good actions on earth, and the relators and remembrancers of them in heaven. Not but that the all-seeing God of himself knows and takes notice of all the good actions of good men, and

records them to perpetuity in the most faithful register of his omniscience; but he would have his holy angels to be conscious of our good actions, not only that they might congratulate our happiness as fellow-servants, and members with us under Christ, their and our Lord and Head; but also and especially that they might be witnesses of his righteous judgment at the last day, when his Son shall come in his glory, with millions of his holy angels, to judge the world.

Hence St. Paul, having particularly instructed his son Timothy, in all the principal duties of his episcopal office, concludes his discourse with this solemn obtestation, 1 Tim. v. 21. *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things.* Where, having already appealed to God the Father and Son, he also adds, *the elect angels,* because they in the future judgment shall be present as witnesses with their Lord.

This may suffice to have spoken of *the holy angels, their existence, and their ministry;* their nature, their state, and condition, with reference to God, and their office in relation to us, all contained in those few words of my text, *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?* I come in the last place to a brief practical application of the whole discourse. The doctrine of the angels of God, as before explained and asserted, serves for many excellent uses.

1. When we consider the certain existence of an infinite number of those most noble creatures the angels, that have always inviolably observed the laws

of their creation, and constantly persevered in the most faithful obedience and service of the great Creator, God blessed for ever; this consideration will mightily help to dispel and scatter those dark and cloudy thoughts of the divine Providence, which are apt sometimes to arise within us, when we behold the lamentable corruption and apostasy of mankind.

Mankind was crippled in his cradle, and lost in the fall of the very first man Adam. And when God in mercy renewed a covenant of grace with lapsed man in Christ, that covenant was also soon violated, and the world in process of time so utterly polluted with the most abominable wickedness, that nothing but an universal deluge of water, carrying away the whole race of men, (excepting only eight persons saved by miracle,) could cleanse it. How long afterwards was the worship of the true God shut up in one family of people, all the rest of the sons of men being overwhelmed with idolatry! And after the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour hath appeared to the world, and enlarged the bounds of God's church, yet how many nations still *sit in darkness and in the shadow of death*, having nothing to guide them but the light of nature, and some mangled relics of the primitive revelation; and yet the far greatest part of them will not be guided by these neither! And among those that outwardly profess the Gospel of Christ, how few are there who in their hearts and lives conform to the great fundamental rules and precepts of it! The consideration of this, if we looked no farther, would tempt us to think, that the end and design of God's creation is upon the matter frustrated and defeated.

But then, on the other side, we are to consider, that there have been a remnant of men in every age, that have yielded to and been recovered by the grace of God, who shall glorify him, and be glorified by him to eternal ages. Which, though compared to the rest of mankind, that have perished in their own folly, they are but very few, yet taken by themselves, and all together, make up a vast body of men. God of his infinite mercy grant that we ourselves may be of that blessed number.

And we may farther consider, that besides us men, the great God hath an innumerable multitude of more excellent creatures, the holy angels, who have constantly and perseveringly glorified him, and most faithfully served him, who never yet sinned nor shall sin against him. These owe their confirmation in virtue and bliss to the grace of the eternal Word and Son of God, as we do our redemption to his blood; and therefore they shall, together with elect men, sing praises *to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for evermore.*

When therefore we are troubled and offended to see how ill things go here below; how vice triumphs, and virtue is discountenanced, disgraced, and trampled upon; how the great and good God is dishonoured and affronted, and his laws disregarded and despised by the generality of men; what a vast train of miserably deluded and self-deluding mortals the prince of darkness draws after him into utter perdition. Let us then look upwards, and view the heavenly regions above us, where millions of millions of holy angels dwell. There the kingdom of God is in its glory; there virtue shines in its full lustre and

brightness; there is no sin, no disorder; there all things go as the great Creator would have them. And at the consummation of all things, the whole number of faithful men of all ages, from the beginning of the world, shall be added to the society of good angels, and made like unto them; and both together make up one church perfectly triumphant; all wicked men and angels being finally subdued. And there shall be *new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness* and nothing but righteousness *shall dwell,* 2 Peter iii. 13. Ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου, *Let this thy kingdom come,* O our heavenly Father!

2. When we consider what glorious beings the angels are, and yet that they are but creatures of, and servants to, the God whom we serve, waiting before his throne, and humbly attending his commands; this consideration, if we let it sink deeply into our hearts, must needs possess us with most awful apprehensions of the glorious majesty of our God at all times, but especially in our approaches to him in his worship, and fill us with the greatest reverence and humility. We should do well often to call to mind Daniel's vision, to whom was represented *the Ancient of days sitting upon his throne, a thousand thousands ministering unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him,* Dan. vii. 9, 10. and that of Isaiah, chap. vi. 1, 2, 3. *I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did*

fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

With what reverence should we behave ourselves in our addresses to the divine Majesty, before whom the seraphims themselves hide their faces! And if they cover their feet, i. e. (say interpreters) are conscious to themselves (though not of any sin, yet) of their natural imbecility and imperfection, compared to the infinitely glorious God; how should we clods of earth, we vile sinners, blush and be ashamed in his presence, assuming no confidence to ourselves, but what is founded on the mercies of God, and the merits of our blessed Redeemer and Advocate Jesus Christ!

And when we find ourselves inclined to pride and vanity, to think highly of ourselves and of our services to God, let us reflect at what a vast distance we come behind the holy angels, how far short our poor, lame, imperfect services are of their holy and excellent ministry. Yet,

3. When we think of the ministry which the holy angels perform towards God, and for us; let us at the same time propound them to ourselves, as patterns and examples for our imitation.

As we daily pray, so we should continually labour and endeavour, that *God's will may be done in earth* by us, *as it is in heaven* by them. For although in this state of mortality we shall never reach the perfection of angels, yet, by aspiring to it, we shall certainly become much better men; and if we come short of what we aim at, we shall nevertheless far exceed what we are. As therefore we hope to be equal to the angels (in a blessed immortality) here-

after, so let us study to be like them (in holiness and righteousness) now. Let us emulate their exalted love (the source and fountain of all the excellent services they performed) to their Creator, *by loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength,* Mark xii. 33. We have one reason to love God which the angels have not, and that is the forgiveness of many and great sins; the most endearing obligation. And as they continually laud and praise the great and good God, and Lord of all things, so let us pay the daily tribute of our praises and thanksgivings to him, according to our utmost powers in this state of infirmity. And when we consider their fervent love and charity to us, in their earnest desire and study of our good and welfare, and in their most ready diligence to do all good offices for us; let us then remember, how much more we are obliged to love and assist one another, who have the same common nature, passions, and infirmities, and therefore stand in mutual need of each other; whereas the holy angels are above any benefit or advantage, which any the best of us can contribute to them. Let us admire their condescension, in that they, being creatures so glorious, should so willingly stoop and humble themselves to minister to us sinful dust and ashes; and let us from hence learn that excellent lesson, *By love to serve one another,* Gal. v. 13. i. e. when charity requires it, not to disdain or refuse any good office we can do our neighbour, though it be otherwise servile, and seemingly beneath our dignity.

Thus the holy angels are our patterns.

4. The doctrine of the inspection of the angels of

God over us may serve to teach us a holy fear, circumspection, and caution in all our behaviour, even in our most secret recesses and retirements.

When we think ourselves alone, we are not so, but in the most reverend and awful society. Wherefore "in every place, in every corner, revere the "presence of thy angel; and do not that before him, "which thou wouldest be ashamed to do before a "man like thyself[l]."

You have heard how St. Paul, intending, as it were, to bind Timothy to the good behaviour in all the parts of his episcopal office, charges him, not only before God and Christ, but also *before the elect angels*, to be careful of his duty, 1 Tim. v. 21. Upon which text Mr. Calvin's note is observable, "He "must be more stupid and senseless than a stock or "stone, whose sloth and carelessness in his duty is not "shaken off by this one consideration, that the go-"vernment of the church is the theatre of God and "angels[m]." Indeed, there is not the meanest member of the church, but acts his part in that tremendous presence.

But this consideration should especially affect our souls, when we meet together in the houses of God, the places of his worship, wherein the holy angels (as the church of God both before and after Christ always believed) assemble together with us. Hence the Psalmist, Psalm cxxxviii. 1, 2. *I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing*

[l] In omni loco, in omni angulo, reverentiam exhibe tuo angelo; neque illo præsente facias, quod me præsente erubesceres.

[m] Sane plusquam stupidum et saxeum esse oportet, cui non excutiat torporem et oscitantiam sola hæc consideratio, theatrum Dei et angelorum esse ecclesiæ gubernationem.

praises unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple.

He conceived, that in his solemn worship towards the place of God's especial presence, he worshipped not only before God, but also before *the gods*. But who are they? The Septuagint tells us, by rendering the Hebrew words ἐναντίον ἀγγέλων, *over against* (i. e. before) *the angels*. And to the same purpose is St. Chrysostom's paraphrase on the place; "I will "strive to sing with the angels, contending with "them, and joining in choir with the supernatural "powers [n]."

St. Paul, exhorting the Corinthian women to have a modest veil or covering over their heads in their religious assemblies, persuades them to that piece of reverence and decency by this very consideration, that they appeared in the presence of the angels. ***For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head*** (i. e. a veil or covering over her head, the sign of her husband's power over her) ***because of the angels.*** [1 Cor. xi. 10.]

Alas! how little do they think of this, who sit or loll, and neither bow a knee, nor lift up an hand, nor move a lip at the public prayers, as if they bore no part in them; as indeed, till they mend their manners, they shall have no share in the benefit of them; who sleep, or talk with one another, or laugh, or suffer their eyes and thoughts to wander after vanity, when they should seriously attend to the word of God read or preached to them! Methinks these men, though they regard not the angel on earth, the priest; though they have no respect to the congregation of

[n] Μετ' ἀγγέλων ἄδειν βιάσομαι, καὶ φιλονεικήσω τὴν ἄμιλλαν πρὸς αὐτοὺς θέσθαι, καὶ συγχορεῦσαι ταῖς ἄνω δυνάμεσι.

faithful and devout Christians; yet should be awed into more reverence by the presence of the angels of heaven; and so indeed they would, if they believed and seriously considered it.

5. From the main thing in the text, the office of the holy angels, whereby *they are sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation*, we may understand the great goodness of God to good men, and the most happy and blessed estate of all the faithful.

This is the very use that David makes of the doctrine, Psalm xxxiv. where having laid down this proposition, *The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him, and delivereth them*, ver. 7. he thus applies it in the verse immediately following, *O taste and see that the Lord is gracious: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.* As if he had said, What a wonderful expression of the divine goodness is this, that the glorious powers of heaven should thus attend upon us worms on earth! and how safe and happy must the good man needs be, under the conduct and protection of those wise, good, and mighty spirits! What need he fear either wicked men or devils, who is continually secured by so strong a guard! Who would not endeavour to be in the number of the faithful, and to be enrolled into so blessed a society! Indeed this should be our greatest care, to secure our being in a state of sincere piety, and then we are secure to all other purposes whatsoever, and need not take care about any thing else. *For who is he that will* (or can) *harm us, if we be followers of that which is good?* 1 Pet. iii. 13.

We may then sit down in peace, and joyfully sing

the song of the divine Psalmist, Psalm xci. 1. &c. *Qui habitat in abscondito Altissimi*, &c. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.* But how comes the faithful person to be thus secure? the Psalmist tells us, ver. 11. *For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*

What a mighty support and comfort will this be to us, if our consciences bear witness to our integrity, in all dangers, distresses, and necessities, yea in our last extremity, and in the hour of death? For the good angels of God shall go along with us in the whole course of our lives, never leaving us till they have safely landed us in a happy eternity. When we are in our extreme agony, those blessed spirits shall minister to us, as they did to our Saviour in his; and when we breathe out our last, they shall watch our souls, that the wicked one may not touch them, and shall safely convey them into Abraham's bosom, where we shall be out of all danger for ever. Wherefore,

6. And lastly, Let all truly good men continually bless and praise God for this his unspeakable goodness to them. Let them hear the words of the Psalmist, Psalm xxxii. 10, 11. and xxxiii. 1. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Be*

glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.

Let us conclude all with that excellent doxology of our church in the Office of the Communion.

" It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, " that we should at all times, and in all places, give " thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty " everlasting God.

" Therefore with angels and archangels, and with " all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify " thy glorious name, evermore praising thee, and " saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven " and earth are full of thy glory: glory be to thee, " O Lord most high." *Amen.*

SERMON XIII.[a]

PRESCRIBED FORMS OF PRAYER IN THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD, PRACTISED FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY, AND ARE NOT ONLY ANCIENT, BUT USEFUL AND NECESSARY UPON MANY ACCOUNTS.

1 TIM. ii. 1, 2.

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

ST. PAUL the apostle had, in the foregoing chapter, given instructions to bishop (or rather archbishop) Timothy concerning the regulation of preaching and preachers within his province, which was the proconsular Asia, of which Ephesus was the metropolis. For so we read chapter the first of this Epistle, ver. 3. *As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.* There were it seems some heterodox teachers within that province; and by the sequel it appears they were Judaizing doctors, who taught the observation of the Mosaic law, as necessary to Christians, such as the Cerinthians and others. For so we read, ver. 5, 6, 7.

[a] [This Sermon was composed after the restoration, when the Liturgy was again in use.]

The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain janglings; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. Hence in the following verses he shews, against those heterodox teachers, the right use of the Law, and also sets forth the grace of the Gospel, which should be the principal subject of all Gospel preaching.

Now the apostle having thus instructed Timothy as to the matter of preaching and preachers, he proceeds in the next place to give him farther orders, concerning other ecclesiastical matters; and first of all and chiefly concerning the public and common prayers of the church, in the words of my text: *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority; that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty:* πρῶτον πάντων, *first of all;* which words, as Estius well notes, are to be understood, not of a priority of time, but of dignity; in the same sense, as our Saviour in the Gospel bids us seek, πρῶτον, *first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*, Matt. vi. 33.

Prayer is the principal and most noble part of God's worship, and to be preferred before preaching: nay indeed, to speak strictly and properly, preaching is no part of divine worship; for every proper act of divine worship must have God for its immediate object, and God's glory for its immediate end. But the immediate object of preaching are men, to whom it is directed, and the immediate end of it is the

instruction of men; though it is true, in the ultimate end of it, it tends to and ends in the glory of God, as indeed all religious actions do, and all our other actions of moment should do. But prayer is immediately directed to God himself, and it is an immediate glorification of him, and a paying of divine worship and honour to him. In a word, by preaching we are taught how to worship God; but prayer is itself God's worship. Hence the place of God's worship is styled by our Saviour οἶκος προσευχῆς, *the house of prayer,* Matt. xxi. 13. It is not called a *preaching house,* (though there must be preaching there too at due times and seasons,) but a *house of prayer,* because prayer is the principal worship of God, to which all religious houses are dedicated, and it is the constant and daily business to be performed in them. No wonder therefore that the apostle charges Timothy to take a special care concerning the Liturgy and public prayers of the church, that they be duly and rightly performed: *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made,* &c.

The text is an order or injunction given by St. Paul to Timothy, a bishop of the church, concerning the public and common prayers to be used in the several churches and congregations under his care and jurisdiction. That Timothy was a bishop, and bishop of Ephesus, the metropolis or chief city of Asia, is so fully attested by all antiquity, that he must be either very ignorant or very shameless that shall deny it; especially there being besides very plain evidences of the episcopal power and authority wherewith he was invested, in this very Epistle of St. Paul written to him. Such is that in the first chapter,

verse 3, already upon another account cited; *As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.* He had therefore a power invested in him of calling to account the presbyters and teachers within the diocese of Ephesus, concerning their preaching and doctrine, which is certainly a branch of episcopal power. We read also in the same Epistle, that he was appointed as a judge of the presbyters of Ephesus to hear and determine those cases that concerned them, chap. v. 19. *Against an elder* (or presbyter) *receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.* He had also the power of ordination, (which being added to the former makes up the complete episcopal power and authority,) as may be plainly gathered from the caution given him by St. Paul to use that power aright; ver. 22. of the but now mentioned chapter: *Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.*

To this public person, to this great bishop of the church, is this charge given by St. Paul in my text: *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men,* &c. He was to take care that such prayers should be made in all churches and congregations under his inspection and jurisdiction.

And how could he do this, but by providing by his authority that there should be set forms of prayer, framed according to this rule given him by the apostle, to be used in those churches? Sure I am, the primitive catholic church understood this to be the meaning of the apostle. Hence in all the churches of Christ over the world, however distant from each

other, we find set forms of public prayers, suited and conform to this direction of the apostle. This was observed by the ancient author of the book concerning the calling of the Gentiles, attributed to Prosper, who occasionally citing the words of my text, hath this note upon it: "This law and rule of prayer "hath been so religiously and unanimously observed "by all Christian priests and people, that there is no "part or quarter of the world, wherein there are not "forms of prayer suited and agreeable to this pat-"tern [b]."

And indeed, if we consult all the ancient Liturgies extant at this day, we shall find this observation to be most true; they are all framed and composed according to this rule of the apostle.

And it is observable, that however those ancient Liturgies have been altered and corrupted in after-times by many additions and interpolations, yet there are in all of them still remaining many excellent and divine forms of prayer and thanksgiving, wherein they do all perfectly agree, and which therefore cannot reasonably be thought to have any other original than apostolical order and appointment, delivered to the several nations and people, together with the first preaching and plantation of Christianity among them. Such, for example, is the *Sursum corda* in the Office of the Communion, the priest saying, "Lift "up your hearts;" and the people answering, "We "lift them up unto the Lord [c]." There is no Liturgy

[b] Hanc legem supplicationis ita omnium sacerdotum et omnium fidelium devotio concorditer tenet, ut nulla pars mundi sit in quo hujusmodi orationes non celebrentur a populis Christianis.

[c] [The Apostolical Constitutions mention Ἄνω τὸν νοῦν, et Ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν Κύριον. VIII. 12. Cyprian says, Sacerdos ante orationem

in any church of Christ to this day but hath this form. Such is the excellent form of thanksgiving in the same Office of the Communion, to be performed by the priest and people; the priest saying, "Let "us give thanks unto our Lord God;" and the people answering, "It is meet and right so to do[d]." This form also is to be found in all the most ancient Liturgies.

Such also is the doxology or glorification of the ever-blessed Trinity: "Glory be to the Father, and "to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." For they are much mistaken who think that this form was first set up in the church of Christ against the Arian heresy: it was in use in the churches of Christ from the beginning. Hence Justin Martyr, who lived very near to the apostolic age, in his second Apology towards the end setting forth the public worship of Christians in his time, tells us[e], "In all our obla-"tions" (i. e. in all our eucharists) "we bless and "praise the Maker of all things, by his Son Jesus "Christ, and by the Holy Ghost." And the Christians of Smyrna, in their Epistle to the church of Philomelia, (extant in Eusebius[f],) concerning the martyrdom of Polycarp, the disciple of St. John the apostle, of which they were eyewitnesses, tell us, that blessed martyr in his last prayer at the stake

præfatione præmissa parat fratrum mentes dicendo, *Sursum corda* —respondet plebs, *Habemus ad Dominum.* De Orat. Dom. p. 213.]

[d] [In the Apostolical Constitutions we find Εὐχαριστήσωμεν τῷ Κυρίῳ—ἄξιον καὶ δίκαιον—ἄξιον ὡς ἀληθῶς καὶ δίκαιον πρὸ παντῶν ὑμνεῖν κ. τ. λ. VIII. 12.]

[e] Ἐπὶ πᾶσί τε οἷς προσφερόμεθα, εὐλογοῦμεν τὸν ποιητὴν τῶν πάντων διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ διὰ Πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου. [Apol. I. 67. p. 83.]

[f] [Lib. IV. c. 15.]

used this form [g]: "I praise thee, I bless thee, I glo-
"rify thee, by the eternal High Priest Jesus Christ,
"thy beloved Son, by whom to thee, together with
"him, in the Holy Ghost, be glory now and for
"ever, Amen." And the brethren of Smyrna themselves thus conclude their Epistle, "We bid you
"farewell in our Lord Jesus [h], with whom be glory
"to God the Father and to the Holy Ghost." Hence in the Apostolical Constitutions, wherein we have certainly the best account of the primitive Liturgy of the eastern churches, we find this full doxology [i]: "To thee, O Father, and to thy Son Christ our
"Lord, and God, and King, and to the Holy Ghost,
"be glory, praise, majesty, adoration, and worship,
"now and to eternal ages, Amen." So that if this form of doxology had an occasional original upon the account of any heresy that denied the faith of the holy Trinity, it was at first designed against the Cerinthians and Ebionites, who disturbed the church of Christ in the very age of the apostles, and denied the divinity of our Lord, and consequently oppugned the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, no less than the Arians afterward did.

But the truth is, this doxology was not occasionally taken up in opposition to any heresy, but is an essential part of Christian worship, necessary to be used always by all Christians, if there had never been any heresy in the world. For all Christians are baptized in, or into, *the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,* i. e. into the faith, service, and worship of the holy Trinity, and so from

[g] Σὲ αἰνῶ, σὲ εὐλογῶ, σὲ δοξάζω, &c.

[h] Μεθ' οὗ δόξα τῷ Θεῷ καὶ Πατρὶ καὶ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι.

[i] Σοὶ δόξα, &c. [VIII. 15.]

their very baptism are obliged to render and give to each person divine worship and adoration. Indeed this is the main difference between the worship of Christians and Jews; the Jews worship God as one single person, acknowledging neither Son, nor personal Holy Ghost subsisting in the divine nature. But we Christians worship God in a trinity of persons and unity of essence, "God the Father, Son, "and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God."

I add, to what hath been already observed, the consent of all the Christian churches in the world, however distant from each other, in the prayer of oblation of the Christian sacrifice in the holy eucharist, or sacrament of the Lord's supper; which consent is indeed wonderful. All the ancient Liturgies agree in this form of prayer, almost in the same words, but fully and exactly in the same sense, order, and method; which whosoever attentively considers, must be convinced that this order of prayer was delivered to the several churches in the very first plantation and settlement of them. Nay, it is observable, that this form of prayer is still retained in the very canon of the mass, at this day used in the church of Rome, though the form doth manifestly contradict and overthrow some of the principal articles of their new faith. For from this very form of prayer, still extant in their canon, a man may effectually refute those two main doctrines of their church, the doctrine of purgatory, and that of transubstantiation, as I could clearly shew you, if I had time, and this were a proper place for it. Thus by a singular providence of God, that ancient, primitive, and apostolic form of prayer still remains in the Liturgy of that church, as a convincing testimony

against her latter innovations and corruptions of the Christian doctrine. But this by the way.

The same harmony and consent of the ancient Liturgies is to be found in the Office of Baptism, where the person to be baptized is obliged first to "renounce the Devil and all his works, the pomp "and vanity of the world," &c. and then to profess his faith in the holy Trinity, "God the Father, Son, "and Holy Ghost[k]." This form is to be found in the Liturgies of all the churches of Christ throughout the world, almost in the very same words, and is therefore doubtless of primitive and apostolical original. They called the former part of this form ἀπόταξις, *the abrenunciation,* viz. of the Devil, and all those idols wherein the Devil was worshipped among the heathens. The latter part of the form was called σύνταξις, *the aggregation,* or joining of one's self to the worship and service of the only true God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Other instances of the like nature I could give you, if the time would permit. But these I think are sufficient to shew that there were set, prescribed offices and forms of prayer and praise, and profession of faith, delivered to all the churches of Christ by the apostles or their immediate successors; many of those forms (notwithstanding the manifold corruptions and depravations of the primitive Liturgies in after-times) being still retained, and unanimously used in all the churches of Christ to this day.

Indeed the exercise of the public worship of God in set and prescribed forms of prayer hath been the

[k] [This may be seen in Tertullian, de Spectac. c. 4. de Corona, c. 3. de Baptismo, c. 6, 11. Hippolytus, in Theophan. c. ult. Cyprian. Epist. 70, 76.]

practice of all settled churches of God, not only ever since Christianity, but also before our Saviour's coming into the world. All the learned know, that the ancient church of the Jews before Christ had set forms of prayer, which they used in their temple and synagogues, as also the Jews have at this day. And indeed many of those forms are very good and excellent, and have no other fault to be found in them, but that they do not end as the prayers of us Christians do, "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Nay, it is very observable, that our Lord Christ himself, when he recommended to his disciples, upon their desire, a prayer to be used by them, (that which we call *The Lord's Prayer*,) he did not frame an entirely new prayer, in words of his own conception, but took out of the ancient euchologies, or prayer books of the Jews, what was good and laudable in them, and out of them composed that prayer. The very preface of the Lord's prayer, *Our Father, which art in heaven,* was the usual preface of the Jewish prayers. And all the following petitions are to be found almost in the very same words in their prayer books.

He that doubts of this, if he understands the learned languages, may be satisfied by consulting Drusius and Capellus, in their notes upon the sixth chapter of St. Matthew, the ninth and following verses. And the reflection of the learned Grotius upon this is very remarkable: "So far was the "Lord himself of the Christian church from all af-"fectation of unnecessary novelty[1]." Our Saviour in this instance hath plainly shewn us, what respect

[1] Tam longe abfuit ipse Dominus ecclesiæ ab omni affectatione non necessariæ novitatis.

we ought to have for forms of prayer anciently received and approved by the church of God. And indeed it were no difficult thing to shew, that many of the offices and forms of prayer, and other religious institutions received in the church of Christ, are in their first original to be referred as due to the piety and devotion of the church of God before the coming of Christ in the flesh; Christianity being no innovation, but only the perfection of the old religion; and it being the same spirit of Christ that governed the church of God, both under the Old and New Testament.

You have seen what a mighty prescription we can plead for set and prescribed forms of prayer in the public worship of God. I add, that we have very strong reasons to back this prescription. Set and prescribed forms of prayer in the public worship of God are useful, yea and necessary, upon many, but especially upon these following accounts.

1. They are useful and necessary to obviate and prevent all extravagant levities, or worser impieties in the public worship. If the prayers of the church were left to the private conceptions or extemporary effusions of every minister of the church, what a lamentable worship and service of God should we have in many congregations? We had sad experience of this in those days, when our Liturgy was laid aside; what impertinencies, what tautologies, what bold and familiar addresses to the divine Majesty! what saucy expostulations with Almighty God! yea what blasphemies were heard in the houses of God from the men of those times!

And it is observable, that those impertinencies, yea and impieties, were incident, not only to the

meaner sort of the dissenters from our Liturgy, but even to the principal men and chief leaders among them: of which I could give you some sad instances, but that I delight not to rake in that dunghill. Indeed the public prayers were in those days in many places so absurd and ridiculous, that by them religion itself was exposed to the scorn and contempt of the irreligious. And I am apt to think that from hence, as one main cause, first proceeded that irreligion and atheism which hath since overspread our sinful nation. For enthusiasm commonly leads the way to atheism, and a fanatic religion too often ends at last in no religion.

2. Set and prescribed forms of prayer are necessary in the public worship of God, that ministers less learned may have provision of devotions made for them. It is a true saying, "In every sort of men "and professions, there are some vulgar and lesser "men [m];" the clergy itself not excepted: among whom (it is a truth not to be dissembled) the less learned have been, and I fear always will be, the greater number.

Now it cannot by any considering man be thought reasonable or expedient, that the solemn worship of God, in the congregations over which they preside, especially the administration of the holy sacraments, should be intrusted to their discretion and abilities. Nay, I might add, (what a great man hath well observed,) that a prescribed Liturgy may be as necessary for more learned ministers, that they may have no occasion of ostentation ministered to them, lest their best actions, their prayers, be turned into sin and vanity.

[m] Omne genus hominum habet suum vulgus.

3. Set and prescribed forms of prayer in the public worship are necessary also for this end, that all the members of the church may know the condition of public communion, and understand beforehand what prayers they are to join in; which they cannot do without a public and prescribed Liturgy. If a man come into a congregation, where the minister is left to pray as he pleases, he cannot immediately join with him in prayer, unless he have an implicit, that is, a foolish faith and confidence in the person that prays: he cannot reasonably direct his devotion immediately to God, but must first take time to hearken and consider, whether the prayers of the minister be such as he may safely and heartily join in; which great inconvenience is taken away by forms of prayer, prepared and provided beforehand by the wisdom of the church.

4. And lastly, Prescribed prayers in the church are necessary to secure the established doctrine and faith of the church. If the ministers of the church be left to themselves, to pray as they list, they will be very apt (and it will be very difficult for them to avoid it) to vent their own private opinions and notions in points of religion in their prayers; for men will pray as they think and believe, and all their doctrines will have a tincture of their private notions and conceptions, which may not be always sound and orthodox.

Heterodoxes, false doctrines, yea, and heresies, may be propagated by prayer as well as preaching, and by the former perhaps more effectually than by the latter. For when poor ignorant people shall hear their minister venting a notion in his address to Almighty God, they will be apt to conclude, and not

without reason, that he is fully assured of the truth of it, yea that he hath very good grounds for it, or else he would not dare to utter it to the face of God himself. And thus the confidence of the minister easily at first begets in the simple hearer a good opinion of it, which by degrees grows to a steadfast belief and persuasion.

But now, on the other side, set forms of prayer, composed and prescribed by the wisdom of the church, are an excellent defence and security against innovations in faith. For to be sure the church will take care that her Liturgy and Common Prayers shall not contradict or interfere with her Articles of Religion, but rather confirm them, and by prudent methods insinuate the knowledge and belief of them into the hearers. Indeed the ancient Liturgies were so framed, that they were a kind of systems of orthodox divinity, and antidotes against heresy. And in this the Liturgy of our church comes behind none of the ancient Liturgies. For therein we are obliged to confess the faith of all the ancient creeds. But more especially our frequent doxologies to the most holy and ever-blessed Trinity do abundantly secure us against Arianism and Socinianism, the prevailing heresies of our unhappy times, and of all other heresies the most dangerous. In short, no heretic can heartily join in the offices of prayer and praise, and confessions of faith, prescribed in the Liturgy of our church.

But on the other side, in those congregations where there is no prescribed Liturgy, or office of public prayer, no creed or confession of faith to be rehearsed, all sorts of heretics may easily, and without discovery, find shelter to themselves. Which is

one and the main reason, I doubt not, why at this day the Arians and Socinians among us are all declared enemies to the public worship of the church of England, as it is by law established, and shake hands with the dissenters. For they know full well, that as long as our Liturgy stands, their heresies can never prevail; all the members of our church being obliged in their daily public devotions solemnly to declare against those heresies.

I shall conclude all with a word or two of application.

1. From what hath been said, we may take occasion, and we have very good ground and reason, to reprove the gross error and folly of those, who are against all set and prescribed forms of prayer in the public worship of God, and upon the account of such forms used in our church, separate from the communion of it.

These men must upon the same account have been separatists and schismatics, if they had lived in any other settled church of Christ since the days of the apostles. For you have seen, that this order and injunction given to bishop Timothy in my text, to take care, and provide by his authority, that *supplications, prayers, intercession, and giving of thanks, should be made for all men,* in all the churches and congregations under his care and inspection, was observed by him, and all the other bishops of the primitive church, by causing such forms of prayer to be made and composed for the use of their several churches; and that accordingly the same order of the apostle was observed after the same manner in the catholic church throughout all succeeding ages. The exercise of the public worship being never in

any age of the church (before this latter age of innovation) permitted and intrusted to the discretion and abilities of every private minister.

So that to those who cry up the private conceptions, or extemporary effusions of their ministers, in opposition to set forms of prayer, prescribed by the wisdom of the church in the public worship of God, we may answer with the apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 16. *We have no such custom, nor the churches of God.* And if this be not a good and satisfactory answer, they must be so daring as to say, that the great apostle of Christ was mistaken in his logic, and argued from a wrong and fallacious topic.

And whereas they pretend they cannot edify by such set forms of prayer, nor find any warmth of devotion in the use of them, they do thereby represent themselves under a very ill character, that they are men of a spirit and temper very disagreeable and different from that spirit that hath always governed the catholic church of Christ. They cannot heartily serve and worship God in such a way as the primitive confessors and martyrs, and all good Christians for many succeeding ages did.

But I will not be so severe as to condemn all those as no good Christians who make this plea. I do not doubt but some of them are men of good intentions, and pious dispositions and affections; and if they had not been prejudiced and imposed upon by their deluding teachers, they would have been of another temper. But they have been taught by those deceivers, that prescribed forms of prayer are a stinting of the Spirit; their heads have been filled with harangues and discourses concerning the gift and spirit of prayer, which, they have been told, consists,

not only in pious and holy affections, but also in a variety and volubility of words and expressions; and consequently, that a set form of prayer and the spirit of prayer are inconsistent; which is in effect to say, that a man cannot make use of any of the penitential Psalms, nor any other forms of prayer or praise in the divine Book of Psalms, no nor rehearse even the Lord's Prayer itself, with the spirit of prayer; which to affirm is the height of madness.

But the poor souls labouring under this prejudice, it is no wonder if they flee from our Liturgy, as from a serpent or scorpion; no wonder that, when they are forced occasionally to be present at it, they are not at all affected with it; nay, on the contrary, find an aversation of their spirits from it.

Woe be to the men that have thus abused those poor souls, or rather those precious souls, for whom our Lord Christ died, and shed his most precious blood! that by such silly pretences have drawn them into schism, and a sinful separation from the communion of the best of churches.

But there are some of our dissenters that pretend that they are not against all set forms of prayer, nor do they dislike our Liturgy, merely as it is a set and prescribed form of prayer; but because there are some, yea very many things in it that are not agreeable to the word of God, and to which therefore they cannot assent. Now to these men all that I have at present to say is this, I will not be so lavish or extravagant in the praise of our Liturgy, as to say it is an absolutely perfect form of prayer, or so good as not to be capable in some respects to be made better; for this were in effect to say, it is more than a human composition: but this I do aver, that there

is no passage in it, but what admits of a fair and candid interpretation; that there is nothing in it directly sinful, or such as that upon the account thereof a man might justify his separation from the communion of our church. This hath been again and again unanswerably proved by the learned men of our church. And as to the main body of our Liturgy, it is a most excellent office and form of prayer, most agreeable to the holy Scriptures, that comes nearest to the primitive Liturgies; and, in a word, is the best Liturgy at this day extant in the Christian world.

But indeed it is a mere pretence of our dissenters when they say they are not against a set and prescribed form of prayer in the public worship, and that they only dislike some passages in our Liturgy. For if this were true, why do they not in their congregations use our Liturgy, omitting those passages in it, at which they pretend to be offended? Or at least, why do they not compose a Liturgy of their own? It is plain therefore and evident, that they are really against all set and prescribed forms of prayer in the public worship, be they otherwise never so blameless; and consequently that they oppose therein the consent and the unanimous practice of the catholic church of Christ.

This I had to say to our dissenters. But,

2. What we have said concerning prescribed forms of prayer as always from the days of the apostles used in all settled churches of Christ, may administer abundant satisfaction and confirmation to all that adhere to the communion of the church of England, and consequently to the Liturgy and form of prayer prescribed in that church.

This may be our comfort, that we serve and worship God in the same way that the primitive confessors and martyrs, and all good Christians in the succeeding ages did.

We have a Liturgy conform to this law and rule of prayer laid down by the apostle in my text, and observed by the catholic church. We have good and wholesome supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving, not only for ourselves, but for all men.

Those excellent men, our first reformers, took care to retain and preserve what was primitive and good in the Liturgies of other churches, and to pare off all excrescences and adventitious corruptions of after-times. We have no prayers to saints or angels, but all our prayers are directed, as they ought to be, *to God alone, through Jesus Christ the only Mediator between God and man.* We have no fabulous legends imposed on us; but we have the holy Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, in an excellent order and method daily read unto us. Our prayers are in a tongue and language that we all understand. We have an entire sacrament, the cup of blessing in the holy eucharist, which was sacrilegiously taken from us by the church of Rome, being happily restored to us. The ridiculous pageantry and fopperies of that church are laid aside, and we have the holy sacrament purely, reverently, and decently administered.

Let us bless and praise God for these his great mercies, and make a good use of them. Let us constantly resort to the prayers of our church, and neglect no opportunity of receiving the holy sacrament. And in our daily prayers let us be serious, reverent, and devout, shaking off that coldness and indiffer-

ency which is sadly observable in too too many, and which is enough to render the best of Liturgies ineffectual and contemptible.

In a word, let our practice answer to our prayers; let us live like Christians, and as becomes the members of so excellent a church. And if we do so, our prayers will be acceptable to God, and bring down a blessing, not only upon ourselves, but upon our church and state too, and we shall see peace in Sion, and prosperity in our Israel.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant, through our Lord Jesus Christ: to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be given all honour and glory, adoration and worship, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON XIV.

THAT THE DOCTRINE OF THE RECOMPENSE OF REWARD TO BE BESTOWED ON THE RIGHTEOUS AFTER THIS LIFE, WAS UNDERSTOOD AND BELIEVED BY THE PEOPLE OF GOD BEFORE THE LAW WAS GIVEN; AND THAT IT IS LAWFUL TO SERVE GOD WITH RESPECT TO, OR IN HOPE OF, THE FUTURE HEAVENLY RECOMPENSE.

HEBREWS xi. 26.

For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

THIS chapter throughout is an encomium or commendation of faith; the efficacy and virtue whereof the divine author declares and sets forth by very many examples of those saints and holy men, that were the ancestors of the Jews to whom he wrote, and who by faith did and suffered many great and wonderful things. Wherein the design of the author is to animate and encourage the Christian Jews to a constant perseverance in the profession and obedience of Christ's Gospel, notwithstanding the persecutions which they suffered from their unbelieving brethren for the sake thereof. Which indeed were so severe, that some of those Christian Jews, to avoid them, had already shrunk from and deserted the church assemblies, as we learn from the 25th verse of the preceding chapter, and were in danger of a total apostasy from Christianity: the dreadful consequence whereof the author excellently sets forth in the following verses of the same chapter to the

end. But to fortify them against those persecutions, the most effectual means being a steadfast faith and belief of the future reward, he therefore in this chapter exemplifies such a faith in very many most illustrious instances thereof, recorded in the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

The paragraph, of which my text is part, concerns Moses the great prophet and legislator of the Jews, whom above all others they admired; and therefore the divine writer dwells longer upon his example.

He begins with the nativity of Moses, and therein takes occasion to set forth the faith of the religious parents of so excellent a son, ver. 23. *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw him a proper* (or goodly) *child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.* Which words some very learned interpreters think have reference to an ancient tradition among the Jews, delivered us by Josephus[a], "That God appeared to Amram the father of Mo-" ses by dream, and promised him a son, who should " in due time deliver the Hebrews from the Egyp-" tian bondage." Which oracle both Amram and his wife, to whom he communicated it, firmly believing, and observing the goodliness and admirable features of Moses, when he was born, promising something extraordinary in him, they concluded that this was the happy child which the oracle had promised them; and therefore they did the best they could to preserve him, notwithstanding the cruel edict of Pharaoh, which they feared not so much, as they confided in the divine prediction, and expected some

[a] Joseph. Antiq. II. 5.

miraculous providence in the case. Indeed that there was some oracle of God delivered concerning Moses, that he should be the redeemer of the Israelites, long before God appeared to him in the bush, (though the sacred history of the Old Testament is silent therein,) is evident enough from the words of St. Stephen concerning him, Acts vii. Where the protomartyr having mentioned Moses's going forth from Pharaoh's court to visit his brethren the Hebrews, and appearing in the behalf of one of them so far as to slay the Egyptian that injured and oppressed him, ver. 23, 24; he presently adds, ver. 25, *for he supposed his brethren would have understood, how that God by his hands would deliver them.*

If he supposed his brethren would have understood this, it is beyond all question he understood it himself. And how could he understand it, but by some divine prediction concerning him to that purpose, antecedent to God's illustrious appearing to him in the bush? Nor is it any contradiction to this, what we read in the third and fourth chapters of Exodus, that when God appeared to Moses in the bush, and commanded him to go to Pharaoh and demand from him the freedom of the Israelites, he a first and second time refused the embassy, or at least was unwilling to undertake it. For this he did, because he looked upon it as impossible by way of treaty to obtain the liberty of God's people from the proud, stubborn, cruel, and inexorable tyrant; at least impossible for him in the ill circumstances he was now in; his life being sought by Pharaoh and the Egyptians for the life of the Egyptian whom he had slain: upon which account he con-

cluded, that he should be so far from procuring the release of the Israelites from their bondage by his going into Egypt, that, as soon as he set foot there, he should infallibly meet with his own death. And indeed that this was at the very bottom of Moses's refusal is evident from hence, that God at least for his encouragement thus bespeaks him: *Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life,* Exod. iv. 19. That herein Moses was to be blamed, as at present under a great conflict of unbelief and distrust of God, cannot be doubted; seeing the holy text expressly tells us, that *the anger of the Lord was kindled against him for it,* Exod. iv. 14.

But the divine author of this Epistle thought it both charitable and reasonable to draw a veil of silence over this infirmity of the otherwise excellent person, which he himself had so candidly confessed to the world in his own writings; and to take no notice of the short eclipse of his faith, which both before and after (excepting only in one instance more) shone with so bright a glory.

Wherefore the admirable faith of Moses himself, in his first adventure, he thus in the next place elegantly describes, ver. 24, 25, 26. *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.* That is, when he was forty years old (as we learn from St. Stephen in the place already cited) he left Pharaoh's court, and went abroad to visit his oppressed brethren, and appeared

courageously in vindication of them; thereby declaring, that he had a greater ambition to join himself to the afflicted people of God, than to retain the honour of being the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter; and that he despised the momentary sinful pleasures of that great monarch's palace, and all the riches and treasures that he might have been heir to, if he had continued there; and esteemed it a far greater happiness to be numbered with the poor, afflicted, and despised Israelites, the people of Christ, whom Christ (as the Λόγος, *the Word of God*, then and from eternity existing) took special care of.

For the reproach of the Israelites seems to me to be called *the reproach of Christ*, not only for the similitude between it, and that which Christ afterward suffered, or because it was a type thereof, as all the Socinians, and divers otherwise orthodox divines, herein agreeing with them, have imagined; but also and chiefly because that people was the people of Christ, and so their reproach his. The people of Christ, I say they were, whom Christ took into his singular favour and tuition; appearing to their ancestors the holy patriarchs; shewing himself to Moses in the bush, and proclaiming himself *the God of his fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, and declaring that *he had surely seen the affliction of his people*, Exod. iii. 6, 7. And afterwards leading the Israelites through the wilderness, as St. Paul himself not obscurely teaches us, 1 Cor. x. 9. and as all the catholic doctors and fathers of the primitive Christian church have with one consent delivered to us. But this by the way; I proceed.

Now what was the motive that induced Moses to make this strange and wonderful choice? My text

tells us, *for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.* For the explaining of which words, the question will be, What was the μισθαποδοσία, *the recompense of the reward,* which Moses had *respect unto?* Grotius understands it to be *terram illam excellentem,* "that excellent land, the land of Ca-"naan, which was promised to Abraham and his "seed." But nothing can be more absurd than this interpretation.

For if this had been the reward that Moses had respect unto, he certainly missed of his aim. For he never set a foot in the land of Canaan, having only seen it afar off from mount Pisgah, and then presently dying, as we read Deut. xxxiv. 4, 5. Nor did he ever in his life attain any other reward, which he might look on as a reasonable encouragement of those heroic enterprises which he undertook; unless we can imagine the perpetual vexation which he sustained, even for forty years together, in governing a cross, perverse, stiffnecked, and stubborn people in the wilderness, to be itself a desirable reward, and worthy of his ambition. It was therefore a reward in another world that Moses looked and had respect unto. Which is also farther evident from hence, that the divine author sets the reward which Moses aimed at as it were in balance against that which he terms *the having a temporary enjoyment of sin*[b], or, as other translators render it, *to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.*

In the judgment therefore of this sacred writer, Moses rejected and despised the sinful pleasures of Pharaoh's court upon this consideration, that they

[b] Πρόσκαιρον ἔχειν ἁμαρτίας ἀπόλαυσιν.

were short and transitory: that he could enjoy them but for a while; that he must die, after some years expired, and bid an eternal farewell to them. On the other side, he chose to take his lot and portion with the afflicted people of God, as having *respect to the recompense of the reward*, attending the virtuous in the other life, which is not temporary, but eternal. That this is the meaning of the author, every man must presently see, that is not strangely blinded with prejudice.

And that he was not mistaken in thinking that Moses had a knowledge and belief of the future reward, I shall prove by a demonstrative argument taken out of the writings of Moses himself. In the fifth chapter of Genesis, ver. 24. we read, that *Enoch walked with God, and was not; for God took him.* Which words, all men that have read them, both Jews and Christians, have always understood of the translation of Enoch (either in his soul only, or in his soul and body together) to heavenly bliss, after a virtuous life spent in this world amongst a wicked and vicious generation of men. He therefore that wrote this history, could not be ignorant of a reward in the other life for them that walk with God in this life.

Now we know that Moses was the penman of this historical book. Moses therefore certainly had an apprehension of that reward which awaits good and pious men in the other world. To this reward he had respect in all the great things which he did or suffered for the people of God: i. e. he believed and hoped for it, and was thereby animated and encouraged in the way of virtue which he had made choice of.

The text being thus explained, very naturally yields us these two observations.

1. That the doctrine of the recompense of reward, to be bestowed on the righteous after this life, was understood and believed by the people of God, before the law was given. 2. That it is lawful to serve God with respect to, or in hope of, the future heavenly reward.

I begin with the first proposition, viz. that the doctrine of the recompense of reward to be bestowed on the righteous after this life, was understood and believed by the people of God before the law was given.

Such a knowledge and belief the divine author assures us Moses had, when he first renounced the glories, treasures, and pleasures of Pharaoh's court, and chose his portion among the afflicted, oppressed people of God; and that was long before the law was revealed to him. And whence learned he this doctrine? We have no ground to say that he received it by immediate divine revelation, seeing we read not of any appearance of God to him, before that in the bush; and an easy and clear account may be given of the original of this his faith, without supposing any such revelation.

He had it therefore by tradition from his religious parents, being nursed by his own mother, and trained up in his father's house till he arrived to some years, and not till then delivered to Pharaoh's daughter, as we read Exod. ii. 10. By them he was taught the true religion, the religion of the holy patriarchs, and this article as a chief branch of it; which religion he still faithfully retained, after he was taken into the palace of that idolatrous prince. Nor is it to be

doubted, but that the same religion in the substance of it, was preserved in all other pious families of the Hebrews, even under the Egyptian bondage; and that the hope and consolation which their religion ministered to them, was their chief support under that miserable servitude.

The article of a future life, as I have already suggested, was part of the creed of the holy patriarchs long before the time of Moses. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, was, by a miraculous translation to the heavenly bliss, made an example, and given as an illustrious proof and demonstration to the succeeding generations, of the glorious reward reserved in the other world for them that walk with God in this life. Nor could they that lived nearer the times of Enoch be ignorant of that mighty work of God, which Moses so many ages after had knowledge of, and delivered down to the generations after him in his writings. Nay, Enoch himself, in his time, was an open asserter and preacher of this doctrine of a life to come; St. Jude assuring us, that he spake and prophesied of God's *coming with thousands of his saints*, or holy angels, *to judge the world*, Jude, verse 14, 15. So that Enoch's after-translation was a plain seal and confirmation of that faith, which he had formerly professed and taught, and was undoubtedly designed by God as such. And the author of this Epistle to the Hebrews, in this very chapter out of which my text is taken, professedly and expressly teaches, that the patriarchs and holy men, who lived before Moses, had the same apprehension of the future reward that Moses had.

The truth is this. God, after the fall of our first parents, and his sentence pronounced on them for

their sin, again revealed himself to them; teaching them both what they should do to recover his lost favour, and what they were to expect from him upon so doing; their duty, and their reward: though in the history of the Old Testament there is no more mention of this revelation, than of the revelation of God to Enoch, and the prophecies he uttered from that revelation. But unless we grant this, we must necessarily run into the error of those of old, who denied the salvation of our first parents.

From this first institution to fallen man proceeded the law of expiatory sacrifices, (as types and shadows of the great sacrifice in due time to be offered by Christ, the second Adam, for the sin of the first,) practised by the immediate sons of Adam, and from thence derived into the practice of all mankind. For the conceit of those who think the light of nature directed the first men to this rite, must needs appear strange to him that more attentively considers the matter. And from the same original (I question not) it is, that the notion of a life to come hath been always found among the heathen nations, even some of the most barbarous nations, of whom neither we nor our forefathers, for many ages past, had any knowledge, till the latter discoveries of a new world. And accordingly St. Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to Titus, verse 2, expressly tells us, that *God, who cannot lie, promised eternal life*, πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων, i. e. (not *before the foundation of the world*[c], as our translators render the words; for then there were no men to whom such promise might be made; but) *before ancient times*, as the

[c] [*before the world began.*]

words otherwhere in Scripture signify, Rom. xvi. 25.[d] i. e. in the most early age of the world, or in the world's infancy.

Now if the primitive revelation of the future life be not yet to this day utterly lost and forgotten among the heathen, yea barbarous nations; what an unreasonable thing is it to imagine, that the tradition of it should so soon perish among God's own people, as that Ahraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the other holy patriarchs, should have no knowledge of it?

And as to those good men that lived under the law of Moses, (though that in the letter of it had none but carnal and temporal promises,) it is certain they still retained the same faith of a life to come, as also their posterity do to this day. Nor did the law that came after, evacuate or thrust out the Gospel that was delivered from the beginning.

This I have formerly shewn you by undeniable instances, upon another occasion[e], and have also given you the full use and improvement of this doctrine, and shall therefore now insist no farther on it, but proceed to the other observation from the text, which is this.

Observ. 2. It is lawful to serve God with respect to, or in hope of, the future heavenly reward.

For so did Moses, as the text expressly tells us; and he is so far from being blamed, that he is commended for his so doing, and propounded as a pattern for others to do likewise.

This I note, to meet with certain airy fanciful

[d] [But the expression in Tit. i. 2. is *πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων*: in Rom. xvi. 25. it is *χρόνοις αἰωνίοις*.]

[e] [Sermon VIII.]

divines of this latter age, who, pretending to a more spiritual, refined, and sublime theology, above all the doctors of the church that have been before them, have among other their subtle doctrines delivered this for a certain truth, That the obedience which is excited by the hope of reward, is not a true, i. e. filial, but a servile mercenary obedience, and so not to be allowed in Christians under the Gospel.

This divinity may be read almost in every page of the writings of Crisp, Saltmarsh, Townsend, Eaton, and the author of the *Marrow of modern Divinity*, and many others of the same herd. Books they are, which though they highly deserve the flames, are notwithstanding still to be found in many families of schismatics, especially those of the independent and anabaptistical sect. These highly admire them, as the most spiritual writings; whilst the very many excellent labours of the orthodox, learned, and pious divines of our church (the wonder of foreigners) are neglected and despised by them.

Now this doctrine of theirs we utterly reject as a Sadducæan fiction, and an error intolerable, and repugnant to the whole tenor of sacred Scripture. A Sadducæan error I call it, because it was the first occasion of the heresy of the Sadducees. For that heresy arose from a saying of Antigonus, the master of Sadoc, who was the author of it, and lived not long after the time of Ezra. The saying, as the learned Drusius relates it out of good authors, was this; "Be not ye like those servants, who serve "their master for reward; but be ye like those ser-"vants who serve indeed their master, but yet not

" for reward[f]." This foolish saying of the sublime doctor, his scholars improved into an execrable heresy; denying that there is any reward to be expected in the life to come of our virtuous actions in this life.

Thus enthusiasm commonly leads the way to atheism or infidelity; and a fanatic religion at last ends in no religion. It is no wonder, that a doctrine designed to banish the future reward out of men's thoughts and consideration, should soon proceed so far as to discard it from their belief, and not to allow it a room in their creed. For it is a very vain thing to make that the object of our faith, which must not be suffered to be the object of our hope and desire. I have said that this error is intolerable, and repugnant to the whole tenor of sacred Scripture; and what I have said will appear most true, from the arguments I shall produce against it; to which arguments I now proceed.

I. In the holy Scriptures, the future reward is every where promised and propounded, as a motive to excite and stir us up to good works. So our Saviour encourages his disciples to a cheerful suffering for *righteousness sake*, by this argument, that their *reward* should be *great in heaven*, Matt. v. 12. And by the same motive he exhorts them to secret and private devotions, viz. that *God who seeth in secret shall reward* them *openly*, Matt. vi. 4. And almost innumerable are the texts of Scripture which

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speak to the same purpose. Now what an unreasonable conceit is it to think, that where a reward is promised as an encouragement to work, it should be a fault and sin to work with an eye or respect to the reward? Nay, hence it appears, that this error in the consequence of it is a horrid blasphemy. For if the hope of the future reward be a sinful motive of obedience, it necessarily follows, that the Holy Ghost, by propounding this motive every where to us, and pressing it on us, lays a snare before us, and tempts and urges us to sin; at which impious consequence every good Christian must needs tremble.

II. The holy Scriptures do not only promise the heavenly reward as an encouragement of our obedience, but also they expressly command and require us, in the way of obedience, to seek after it; i. e. to intend and aim at it, and to make the attaining of it our great design and business. So our blessed Lord, Matt. vi. 33. *Seek ye first* (πρῶτον, principally and chiefly) *the kingdom of God and his righteousness*; that is, God's reward, and God's work; the heavenly glory which he hath promised, and the holiness and righteousness which he requires, as the condition of obtaining it, the one in order to the other. So St. Paul, Coloss. iii. 1, 2. *Seek* τὰ ἄνω, *the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth*; that is, aspire to that heavenly glory, of which Christ your Lord and Head is already possessed, and that in the most eminent degree; having all power in heaven given him, and so the power of bestowing the same heavenly glory on all such as shall tread in his steps and obey his precepts: direct your thoughts, desires, and affec-

tions towards that solid, stable, lasting, yea, everlasting felicity; and suffer them not to settle or rest in the transitory, vanishing, and perishing enjoyments of this earth. And to the same sense and purpose the Holy Ghost speaks in very many other places of Scripture, which I have not time now to recite. It is therefore so far from being sinful, in the course of our Christian obedience, to cast an eye towards the heavenly reward for our encouragement, that we sin if we do not so; yea, if we do not fix our eye on it, and employ our chief studies, cares, and desires about the obtaining of it. For unless we do thus, we transgress the plain commandment of God, who alone hath power to determine what we ought to do, and who best knows what is fittest for us to do.

III. In this eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, out of which my text is taken, we read, that not only Moses, but all the most eminent saints of old served God with respect to the future recompense of reward. For the divine author ascribes all the great things, which they did and suffered for God, to their faith, which he makes the ground and foundation of their whole obedience, both active and passive, and that which animated and encouraged them thereunto.

Now what was this faith? The author plainly tells us, ver. 6. *Without faith it is impossible to please him,* (i. e. God:) *for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* The faith then, whereby all those excellent persons, of whose acts and sufferings we have a compendium or abridgment in this chapter, came unto God, i. e. devoted

themselves to his worship and service, and in so doing pleased him, was a faith respecting God as the μισθαποδότης, *the rewarder of all his faithful servants.*

Wherefore they who affirm, that to serve God in hope of the reward which he hath promised, is a slavish and sinful obedience, do consequentially cast a very foul slur upon all those eminent patterns and examples of virtue which the Holy Ghost here sets forth and propounds to our imitation. They do indeed unsaint them all, and strip them of their sonship, and degrade them into a herd of vile mercenary slaves.

And such is the modesty of the men with whom we have to do, that they startle not at so horrid a consequence, but are ready boldly to affirm, that all those saints were Old Testament saints, living under a servile dispensation, and that therefore their example in this case is no good or warrantable pattern for our imitation under the Gospel. But this pretence (as I have already noted) is a plain contradiction to the very scope and design of the Holy Ghost in this chapter, which is manifestly to propound those Old Testament saints, as they call them, as egregious examples for us Christians to follow. Besides, many of the persons mentioned in the same chapter were persons of so transcendent and heroic a virtue, that the best of us may blush to think at what an humble distance we follow after them. But to put the matter out of all doubt,

IV. We find that the best and most excellent of the New Testament saints obeyed God, and suffered for him upon the same motive and inducement of the heavenly reward. The great apostle of Christ,

St. Paul, speaking of himself, says, *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Where that by the βραβεῖον, *the prize of the high calling of God in Christ,* is meant the future eternal glory, to which God calls us by the Gospel of Christ, as to the reward of our obedience thereunto, is agreed on by all interpreters. The expression is metaphorical, and borrowed from the ancient custom in races, wherein the βραβευτὴς, *he that held and bestowed the prize,* sat in some high place, and from thence by an herald or crier called to each of the racers, acquainted him with the prize, and offered it to him that should best acquit himself in the race. Thus God from the highest heaven calls to us by Christ, and offers us the inestimable prize of eternal glory, if we run well that race of virtue and obedience, which in the Gospel of Christ is marked out and prescribed unto us. Now St. Paul here plainly signifies, that he himself, throughout his whole Christian race, had a continual eye to this *prize of the high calling of God in Christ,* and that the obtaining thereof was his aim and end, his great design and business. It is evident therefore that St. Paul, as well as Moses, served God with respect to the recompense of reward.

The same thing in many other places he affirms, not only of himself, but of the rest of the apostles, and of those other excellent examples of virtue, both active and passive, in that glorious age. You may especially peruse, at your leisure, the following texts, 1 Cor. ix. 24, 25. and chap. xv. throughout, and 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. and Coloss. i. 4, 5.

V. And lastly, We may advance yet a step higher, and safely affirm, that even our Lord Jesus Christ

himself, as man, in his sinless, perfect, and meritorious obedience, had likewise a respect to the recompense of reward. This is the plain sense of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xii. 2. where he exhorts us *to look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

I confess there are some interpreters (and those no mean ones) who so expound this text, as to make it signify very little to our purpose. For they say, that in those words ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς, the preposition ἀντὶ signifies not *for*, but *instead of;* and so that the words are to be thus rendered, *Who, instead of the joy that was set before him, endured the cross,* &c. But what sense is this? Why, say they, the meaning is, that Christ, if it had so pleased him, might not have died; he might have exempted himself from all sorrow and trouble, and lived a life of joy and happiness, flowing with all good things, like that of the innocent Adam in Paradise: *But instead of this, he chose and suffered the cross,* &c. But any unprejudiced person may presently discern this to be a very forced interpretation. It is true, ἀντὶ more frequently signifies *loco,* "instead of," but not always; for it is sometimes used for ἕνεκα, *for,* or *for the sake of,* and denotes the cause of a thing. So whereas we read, Matt. xix. 5. ἕνεκεν τούτου, *for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother,* &c. the same thing is expressed Eph. v. 31. by ἀντὶ τούτου, which is likewise translated *for this cause*[g].

[g] [The examples of ἀνθ' ὧν, *wherefore, on which account,* are numerous: e.g. Luke i. 20. xii. 3. xix. 44. Acts xii. 23. 2 Thess. ii. 10.]

And that so the preposition must be rendered here, and not according to the other sense, is certain; because that other sense is repugnant to the whole design and scope of the place. For the divine author thought not here of an earthly temporary joy belonging to Christ, but of the heavenly joy and felicity designed for him; and therefore he presently expounds it to be his *sitting at the right hand of the throne of God*. Which is also farther evident from hence, that he speaks of a joy which was προκειμένη *set before Christ*, that is, propounded and offered to him, in the same sense as our race (in its whole extent, and with the prize at the end of it) is said to be προκειμένη *set before us*, viz. by God, in the verse immediately preceding. But God never thus propounded any earthly felicity to Christ, but on the contrary set before him the cross and the crown, the former to be suffered here, the latter to be enjoyed hereafter.

Indeed as are all the expressions in the foregoing verse, so is this apparently agonistical, and alludes to the prize set before, propounded, and offered to them that run in a race, for their encouragement. In a word, the προκειμένη χαρὰ, *the joy that was set before Christ*, is manifestly the same thing in kind with the προκειμένη ἐλπὶς, *the hope* (or thing hoped for) *set before us*, of which our author speaks in the sixth chapter of this Epistle, verse 18. *That we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.* It is not therefore to be doubted, but that the meaning of the author is, that Christ, as man, in his obedience and sufferings, had respect to that transcendent joy, glory, and felicity, which God had pro-

pounded to him, and set before him, as the reward of his obedience and sufferings, and was encouraged to do and suffer what he did, by the certain hope and expectation of that reward.

Christ therefore himself, as man, had respect in his obedience to the recompense of reward.

It is the opinion of many learned divines, that the strength which Christ received in his ante-passion in the garden, from an angel there appearing to him, mentioned Luke xxii. 43. consisted chiefly in a vigorous and lively sense and consideration of that incomparable felicity, which he should presently after receive as the reward of his passion, impressed on his mind, and perhaps vocally suggested to him by the same angel. Nor is it any wonder he should need such comfort against his passion, who was under a real fear of it; as we learn from the relations of the evangelists, and from the plain and express words of the author of this Epistle to the Hebrews, assuring us, that Christ *in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cryings and tears, unto him who was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared,* chap. v. 7. Indeed our dear Saviour and Redeemer was pleased to assume our whole nature, with all its concomitant affections and passions, that were not sinful; and therefore he feared death; and therefore he solaced himself with the hope of immortality; and therefore so may we do also. As little wonder is it, that our Lord, having all the legions of the holy angels under his command, should receive this consolation from an angel; seeing he received it in the state of his humiliation, wherein he was made a little lower than the angels; and that in the same

" for reward[f]." This foolish saying of the sublime doctor, his scholars improved into an execrable heresy; denying that there is any reward to be expected in the life to come of our virtuous actions in this life.

Thus enthusiasm commonly leads the way to atheism or infidelity; and a fanatic religion at last ends in no religion. It is no wonder, that a doctrine designed to banish the future reward out of men's thoughts and consideration, should soon proceed so far as to discard it from their belief, and not to allow it a room in their creed. For it is a very vain thing to make that the object of our faith, which must not be suffered to be the object of our hope and desire. I have said that this error is intolerable, and repugnant to the whole tenor of sacred Scripture; and what I have said will appear most true, from the arguments I shall produce against it; to which arguments I now proceed.

I. In the holy Scriptures, the future reward is every where promised and propounded, as a motive to excite and stir us up to good works. So our Saviour encourages his disciples to a cheerful suffering for *righteousness sake*, by this argument, that their *reward* should be *great in heaven*, Matt. v. 12. And by the same motive he exhorts them to secret and private devotions, viz. that *God who seeth in secret shall reward* them *openly*, Matt. vi. 4. And almost innumerable are the texts of Scripture which

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II. The holy Scriptures do not only promise the heavenly reward as an encouragement of our obedience, but also they expressly command and require us, in the way of obedience, to seek after it; i. e. to intend and aim at it, and to make the attaining of it our great design and business. So our blessed Lord, Matt. vi. 33. *Seek ye first* (πρῶτον, principally and chiefly) *the kingdom of God and his righteousness*; that is, God's reward, and God's work; the heavenly glory which he hath promised, and the holiness and righteousness which he requires, as the condition of obtaining it, the one in order to the other. So St. Paul, Coloss. iii. 1, 2. *Seek* τὰ ἄνω, *the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth*; that is, aspire to that heavenly glory, of which Christ your Lord and Head is already possessed, and that in the most eminent degree; having all power in heaven given him, and so the power of bestowing the same heavenly glory on all such as shall tread in his steps and obey his precepts: direct your thoughts, desires, and affec-

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him for that farther goodness which he hath promised us, and which we hope for and expect from him; especially for that greatest good which he hath reserved for us in the life to come, on condition we faithfully serve him in this life, viz. the everlasting enjoyment of himself in heaven.

Wherefore, to conclude, let us not fear, throughout the whole course of our service and obedience to God on earth, continually to eye and aim at the future glorious reward in heaven; for so to do is not only lawful, but highly necessary for us.

1. This constant fixed intuition of the heavenly reward will invigorate, quicken, and animate us to a mighty diligence in the ways of righteousness and holiness: this will sweeten all our labours in God's service, and make our very work a part of our reward. 2. This will enable us to overcome the world by a holy contempt of it and all its vanities. 3. This will arm us against all the temptations of the Devil and the flesh; for he that hath continually in his thought the transcendent excellency of the heavenly bliss, how can he ever be persuaded to part with his right therein for *a mess of pottage*, or to barter it for an empty honour, or for a heap of glittering earth, or for the gratifying of a vile lust, and the enjoyment of a vanishing sinful pleasure? 4. This will make the burden of those afflictions and sorrows, that necessarily attend us in this vale of tears, light and easy. 5. This will be our only support and comfort in the hour of death, when all other earthly comforts fail and forsake us.

In a word, let us with Moses and all the faithful from the beginning of the world, have a constant *respect to the recompense of reward*, by a firm and

steadfast faith; and by the encouragement thereof follow them in the paths of holiness, patience, and self-denial, which they have trod before us; and so at last, in God's due time, we shall undoubtedly *with them be partakers of his heavenly kingdom.*

To which God of his infinite mercy bring us all, through Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour.

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, adoration and worship, both now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON XV.

THAT MANY MAY HAVE A FORM OR SHOW OF GODLINESS, WHEN THEY DENY ITS POWER, AND ARE FAR FROM THE TRUTH AND REALITY OF IT.

2 TIM. iii. 5.

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

IN the beginning of this chapter, we have an illustrious prophecy of St. Paul's delivered to Timothy, concerning what should happen in the church of Christ after his decease; which is thus ushered in, ver. 1. *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come;* ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις· i. e. not only the very last days, towards the end of the world, but in general (according to the Hebrew phrase) *the days to come*, or *the future time*, whether nearer or afar off. For what in the following verses he doth foretell, he supposeth would begin to happen in the age of Timothy, to whom he delivers the prophecy, and that by way of caution or warning to him, as most evidently appears from the end of this fifth verse, immediately after the words of my text, τούτους ἀποτρέπου, *from such do thou* (thou, Timothy) *turn away*, and avoid them. But yet the full completion of the prophecy doubtless reacheth farther than Timothy's days, and extends itself even to the end of the world.

So among very many other interpreters Mr. Calvin thinks, who hath this gloss upon the text: "Under the last days he comprehends the whole state "of the Christian church [a]." For (as the same author goes on) his design is not to compare his own or the age next to him with ours, but in general to represent the condition even of the kingdom of Christ here on earth.

And this he doth to obviate the vain conceit of some men, and those good men too, who fancied that now the Gospel times were come, the golden age would soon return, and continue for ever. An age all holiness, all happiness, a kind of heaven upon earth! And indeed such a blessed change and turn in the world might reasonably have been expected by him that considered only the nature of the Gospel of Christ, its excellent precepts of holiness, the most powerful motives to it therein delivered, the mighty grace of the Spirit of God accompanying the preaching of it, and the astonishing miracles wherewith it was confirmed.

But the apostle here shews, that through the vicious nature and corruption of men it should happen quite otherwise, and that even this admirable Gospel of Christ should in many fail of its designed and desired effect, that even *these last days* of the Gospel should be *perilous times:* perilous, because sinful; sinful, with the highest aggravation, because hypocrisy should abound in them; and very many men should still be very wicked, and yet seem very holy. Some of the chief of their sins and wickedness he particularly describes, ver. 2, 3, 4. *For men*

[a] Sub extremis diebus comprehendit universum ecclesiæ Christianæ statum.

shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. And then he adds a character of their hypocrisy, as a veil drawn over all their wickedness in the words of my text; *having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.*

For the explaining of the text, it will be necessary to inquire into these three things. 1. What is meant by *a form of godliness.* 2. What by the *power of godliness.* 3. What by *denying the power of godliness.*

I. What is meant by *a form of godliness;* the μόρφωσις τῆς εὐσεβείας· though I am not ignorant that the word μόρφωσις hath sometimes another signification, yet here it manifestly signifies *a form;* i. e. a bare show or appearance of godliness, without the truth and reality of it. A false and counterfeit, not a true and real godliness, i. e. an hypocritical religion. As a wooden or stony statue of a man hath the form, shape, figure, likeness, or appearance of a man, but is far from being really so, as having no true flesh and blood, much less a living and reasonable soul; so the hypocrite hath the outward show, likeness, and appearance of a Christian, but is far from being truly such, as being destitute of the substance, life, and soul of Christianity.

This bare *form of godliness* commonly shews itself in these following particulars.

1. In an outward profession of godliness; when men declare themselves to be for godliness, and that

in the strictness of it, and yet are enemies to the life and practice of it; when they are great and high professors of religion, (as the modern phrase is,) but very slender and careless performers of it.

2. In an affectation of godly discourse, to gain the repute and esteem of godliness, and that many times when it is altogether unseasonable, and there is no just occasion or opportunity for it. Many there be who have the tongue of the godly, but the hearts and hands of the wicked. By their discourses you would think them to be very saints, but by a stricter examination of their actions, whereby their hearts also are made manifest, they will be found to be far otherwise.

3. In affecting certain modes and fashionable gestures of godliness in ordinary conversation, such as a grave and demure countenance, eyes lifted up, and the like, when men's hearts are vain, and far from being truly religious or serious.

4. In a reliance on certain outward duties of religion, performed without the inward and sincere affection of the soul. When men rest in hearing or repeating of sermons, or in a formal course of prayer at certain times and seasons, while their lusts are unmortified, and their hearts estranged from the life of God; when they satisfy themselves with instrumental, and neglect essential religion. Hearing of sermons and prayers are indeed necessary duties of religion, but necessary only as instruments and means appointed by God, to bring us, through his grace, to that life and power of religion, which consists in the mortification of our lusts, and the renovation of our hearts, and the reformation of our lives. And therefore to acquiesce in those outward duties of religion,

without an inward, lively sense of it, expressed in agreeable actions, is to have only *a form of godliness.* In these and the like shows and appearances, *a form of godliness* consists.

II. We are to inquire, what is meant in the text by *the power of godliness?*

Briefly, *the power of godliness* is opposed to *a form of godliness.* And therefore, as *a form of godliness* is only an empty show and appearance of it, so *the power of godliness* is unfeigned, real, and true godliness. Which consists in the sincere love of God above all things, and the love of our neighbour as ourselves, expressed in our lives by constant actions of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards our neighbour. And so I pass to the third and last inquiry, viz.

III. What is meant by *denying the power of godliness?*

I answer again, in short, to deny *the power of godliness,* is for a man by indecent and vicious actions to contradict his outward show and profession of godliness. According to that description of the wicked Jews given by St. Paul, Tit. i. 16. *They profess that they know God; but by works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.* And this briefly may suffice for the explanation of the text.

The proposition or doctrine resulting from it thus explained is this.

A man may have a form or show of godliness, when yet he is very far from the power, i. e. the truth and reality of it.

A notable instance of this we have in the Pharisees, who had indeed a very specious form of godli-

ness, but most certainly denied the power of it. They appeared to the ignorant people to be the best of men, when indeed they were the worst. They made long prayers, which were directed more to the people than to God himself, more to gain their applause than God's gracious acceptance; and accordingly all the while they cunningly and underhand devoured *widows' houses*, Matt. xxiii. 14. The trumpet sounded out their alms in the market-place, but this, in the sight of God and wise men, proclaimed their vanity, rather than their charity, Matt. vi. 2. They prayed *in the synagogues* and the corners of *the streets*, and thereby got the reputation of very pious and devout men; but all the while they seldom or never prayed in secret, because indeed they regarded not so much God's acceptance as the approbation and applause of the people, Matt. vi. 6, 7. And indeed they had the poor and low reward which they aimed at. They were cried up, admired, and almost adored by the common people for the most holy men, the most godly sect and party among the Jews; but, all the while, these men were the children of wrath, and the sons of perdition, as far from the power of godliness, as they were famous for the form of it; as much abhorred by God, as they were admired by men.

But what need I look farther than the context for an instance of this truth? The very same men, whom St. Paul describes in the text, as having *a form of godliness*, are charged by him in the foregoing verses with a long and lamentable catalogue of the greatest sins and vices: *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without*

natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God: and then it follows in the text, *having a form of godliness.*

Upon which words of the apostle, Mr. Calvin hath three remarks or observations not unworthy of our notice.

1. He observes, that the persons here noted for these heinous vices are not heathens, or professed enemies to Christianity, but Christians, and such as would be accounted members of the church of Christ. It is the lot of the church of Christ in every age to carry such monsters in her bosom, which yet she cannot but abhor. And therefore if in our times we find many such persons mixed in our communion, whose vices we abominate, though we may sigh and groan under the burden, yet we must patiently bear it, as knowing that this is the fate and portion of the Christian church.

2. He observes, that it is a wondrous thing that such wicked men as are here described by the apostle should have the confidence to pretend to godliness. And yet we have the testimony of the great apostle to assure us of the truth of this so strange a thing. Incredible is the impudence of hypocrites, in palliating and excusing their grossest vices under the outward profession of religion.

3. He observes, that the vices here noted, in the persons described by the apostle, are for the most part sculking and latent vices, such as do not easily fall under vulgar observation, and yet generally accompany a feigned sanctity. For what hypocrite is there that is not proud? that is not a lover of him-

self? that is not a despiser of others? that is not fierce and cruel? that is not fraudulent and deceitful? And so in the rest.

The time will not permit me largely to discourse of each of these vices; but yet I shall briefly run over some of the chief of them, not only for the farther confirmation of the proposition, but also to give you a lively portraiture or representation of the hypocrite, who hath *a form of godliness, but denies the power of it.*

1. Then, these formalists are said to be φίλαυτοι, *lovers of their own selves.* This vice of theirs the apostle puts in the front of this black catalogue, and mentions it in the first place, because it is the fountain and original of all the other vices that follow. Indeed it is not simply and absolutely sinful for a man to love himself, nay, self-love is the first and most immediate dictate of the law of nature; for to love, is to wish well and do good to the person loved: and this every man owes in the first place to himself, and then to his neighbour. Charity begins at home, though it doth not end there. But they are here said to be *lovers of themselves,* whom St. Paul otherwhere notes, as men that *seek their own things,* i. e. who study only or chiefly their own conveniences and advantages in this world, having little or no regard to the glory of God, or the benefit of their neighbours.

Against this vice the apostle cautions us, 1 Cor. x. 24. *Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.* So again, Phil. ii. 4. *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.* And in the twenty-first verse of the same chapter, he notes this as an epidemical

vice; *for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.* And the same apostle otherwhere esteems it as a vice most repugnant to the theological virtue of charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. *Charity seeketh not her own.*

Indeed there is another notion of this φιλαυτία, or *self-love*, among the moralists, with whom it commonly signifies that vice whereby a man is too fond of himself, and arrogates to himself more worth than indeed he hath, overvalues himself. But this vice is noted afterwards by the apostle in other words, as you will presently see. The former notion therefore is most apposite to this place of the apostle.

And from hence we may conclude, that a selfish man, that minds only his own interest in this world, whatever *form of godliness* he may otherwise have put on, can never be a true Christian, is very far from *the power of godliness.* For he is plainly void of charity, "without which" (as our church expresseth it in one of her Collects) "all our doings are nothing "worth, charity being the most excellent gift, the "very bond of peace and of all virtues, without "which whosoever liveth is accounted dead before "God."

2. The formalists, noted by the apostle, are said to be φιλάργυροι, *lovers of money*, covetous persons: a vice also most opposite to *the power of godliness*, and yet a vice very incident to many who make the highest profession of it. The heinousness of the sin appears in this, that it is reckoned with the foulest vices, Eph. v. 3. *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.* And verse 5. of the same chapter, the covetous man is by the apo-

stle branded as an idolater: *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

3. These formalists are said to be ἀλαζόνες καὶ ὑπερήφανοι, *boasters and proud,* i. e. such as through the pride of their hearts boast and vaunt themselves in their words and actions: another most detestable vice, and most contrary to *the power of godliness: For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble,* 1 Pet. v. 5. The proud man therefore is an enemy to God, and a graceless person.

4. They are said to be βλάσφημοι, *blasphemers.* Strange! how can any man that hath any form or show of godliness, that pretends to any thing of religion, be guilty of blasphemy? Yes; even such a man may entertain such notions of God, and maintain such doctrines in religion, as by consequence at least are blasphemy. Thus the Gnostics, on whom the apostle seems here to reflect, held several doctrines that in their consequence were highly blasphemous. Among others of this nature they affirmed, that certain men are necessarily wicked, and by an irrespective absolute decree of God predestinated and determined to sin, and so to damnation, which is to make God the author of sin, and also the punisher of that sin which he himself is the author of; both which are certainly very gross blasphemies. That they held this doctrine, we learn from Irenæus and other ancient writers. And against this their blasphemy St. James discourseth, chap. i. 13, 14, 15. *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted*

when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. I delight not in invidious and odious parallels; but I wish there were not some even in our days, and those such as seem to appropriate to themselves the character of the godly and orthodox party, who after the same manner assert the same blasphemy. But thus even the sin of blasphemy may be sheltered under *a form of godliness.*

But there are some expositors who understand the word βλάσφημοι here in a milder sense, and with reference to men, as it denotes such as by contumelious speeches maliciously injure the fame and reputation of others, especially their superiors, and those that are in authority over them; which is indeed a grievous sin, and inconsistent with *the power of godliness.* And it is a sort of blasphemy, as being against God's representatives, and accordingly very severely prohibited, Exod. xxii. 28. *Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.* And this vice also is censured in the Gnostics by St. Jude in his Epistle, verse 8. where they are said *to despise dominion, and to speak evil of dignities.* And even in our days, how many great pretenders to religion are there, who are egregiously guilty of this kind of blasphemy.

5. These formalists are noted by the apostle as *disobedient to parents.* A very grievous sin likewise, and most opposite to *the power of godliness.* For let men pretend what they will, he cannot truly honour God the Father in heaven, who doth not duly honour his father, his parents on earth.

But interpreters here well observe, that we are to

collect *ex specie genus*, from one special sort of disobedience mentioned, viz. disobedience to parents, all disobedience to superiors in general. And indeed all disobedience to superiors, whether natural, civil, or ecclesiastical, whether to parents, magistrates, or ministers of the church, though it may consist with *a form of godliness*, yet it is utterly inconsistent with the power of it.

6. These formalists are said to be ἀχάριστοι, *unthankful*. Unthankful to God for his manifold mercies; unthankful to men that are their benefactors. A vile sin again, even in the judgment of the heathen, who could tell us, *Ingratum si dixeris*, &c. When you have said a man is ungrateful, you have said all; you cannot say any thing worse of him.

7. They are said to be ἄστοργοι, *without natural affection*. So far were these formalists from Christian charity, which extends to all men, that they were destitute of natural affection, of that love which even nature teacheth men to shew to their own flesh and blood. They were void, not only of true grace, but of good-nature.

8. They are said to be ἄσπονδοι, *truce-breakers*: men that make little or no conscience of their most solemn promises, engagements, and agreements, which they make with others, but can break through them all to serve their own interest.

9. They are said to be διάβολοι, *false accusers*, which is the title of devils. They make no conscience of raising or spreading abroad lies, false and scandalous reports upon innocent persons, to their great prejudice and disadvantage. Alas! how many are there in our days, who though they are great

pretenders to *the power of godliness*, yet are notoriously guilty of this very grievous sin.

10. And lastly, (to pass by the other vices next mentioned by the apostle, as being some way or other reducible to the former,) these formalists are said to be φιλήδονοι μᾶλλον ἢ φιλόθεοι, *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*; i. e. their hearts are set upon their lusts more than upon God or goodness. This indeed is at the bottom of all their other sins before mentioned. For where the sincere love of God above all things is found, it will exclude all the forementioned sins and vices. But where that love is wanting, *qua data porta ruunt*, there a wide gate is opened for all those evils to rush and break in upon the soul. And therefore where this love of God is wanting, *the power of godliness* cannot possibly be.

These are the black characters of the men described by the apostle, and of whom he saith in my text, that *they have a form of godliness, whilst they deny the power thereof.* From whence you may see, what a legion of devils may lurk under the pretended saint, what a troop of the most heinous sins may shelter themselves under *a form of godliness.*

And thus I have fully (I hope) confirmed and illustrated the proposition laid down, viz. That a man may have a form or show of godliness, when yet he is very far from the power; i. e. the truth and reality of it. Now briefly to apply this whole discourse.

1. Let us take heed of being deceived by such as having *a form of godliness*, yet deny the power of it. Let us not be cheated by false appearances. Let us not believe every pretender to godliness, but remember that all is not gold that glitters: that the

greatest wickedness may lurk under the most specious *form of godliness.* Indeed they that affect to make the greatest show of godliness are most of all to be suspected. For the truly good man is humble, content with the testimony of his own conscience, and the approbation of God; and therefore is not so solicitous to set himself out to others to the best advantage, as the hypocrite is.

This caution is the very use of this doctrine, which the apostle himself directs us to in the words immediately following my text: *from such,* such formalists, *turn away;* i. e. shun and avoid them. And from the verses next following, it appears the apostle had a special eye to unlicensed, false, and schismatical teachers, who, by a specious *form of godliness,* endeavoured to seduce men from their lawful pastors, and to draw them from the communion of the church, into house-meetings and private conventicles. Read the sixth and seventh verses, and you would think the apostle foresaw and described the humour of our age. *Of this sort* (i. e. of men, who having *a form of godliness, deny the power of it*) *are they who creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sin, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

1. *They creep into houses.* They forsake the public communion, and keep private conventicles in houses, whereinto they creep and insinuate themselves by fair and specious pretences.

2. *Leading captive silly women.* By *a form of godliness,* and a fair show of more than ordinary holiness, they impose especially upon the female sex, as being the weaker, and generally of lesser judg-

ment, reason, and understanding. In this they imitate the old serpent, the Devil, who began his temptation upon the woman first, and then by her seduced the man also.

3. *Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth:* i. e. they continually hang upon the lips of these schismatical teachers, and are continually hearing and repeating their preachments, so that one would think they must needs learn much; but indeed they never arrive to that solid and substantial knowledge in religion, which, by a constant attendance on their lawful pastors, and their ministry, they might have arrived to.

O that the men of our age would attend to these words of the apostle, and be so wise at last as to shun and avoid such seducers!

That is the first inference, and you see it is the very use which the apostle himself makes of the doctrine.

2. Let us take heed we deceive not ourselves by *a form of godliness,* whilst we *deny the power of it.* Let us often and seriously consider, that we have to do with a God, who is the *searcher of hearts,* and *a trier of the reins,* who cannot be imposed upon by any cunning hypocritical artifices of men. No mist that our self-love can cast either upon our own or other men's eyes can darken his sight, but he sees through it into the bottom of our hearts, and our most secret inclinations. Though we may deceive others and ourselves too with false appearances of things, yet we can never deceive him. He knows us far better than we do ourselves. And at the great day of trial, he will thoroughly anatomize us, and lay our very inside perfectly open and naked to the

view of the whole world, to the sight of men and angels. And how will the man that hath only *a form of godliness, without the power of it,* be then ashamed and confounded!

They are great and weighty words, which the divine author of the Epistle to the Hebrews delivers in this case, chap. iv. 12, 13. *For the word of God* (i. e. the personal Word or Son of God [b], as appears from the sequel) *is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

Let us not therefore acquiesce in a bare *form of godliness,* let us never be at rest till we have attained to *the power of it.* And to assure ourselves of this, let us carefully shun and avoid the sins and vices noted in the persons described by the apostle, and let us practise the contrary virtues.

Let us not be lovers of ourselves, i. e. self-seekers, without a due regard to the glory of God and good of others; but let us make these our chiefest aim and end; for thereby we shall be the truest lovers of ourselves.

Let us take heed and beware of covetousness. It is the repeated caution of our Saviour. Let us covet earnestly the best things; let us *seek first the kingdom of God,* &c. Matt. vi. 33.

Let us lay aside all pride and vainglory, *and be clothed with humility.* 1 Pet. v. 5.

[b] [See Waterland's Works, vol. III. p. 154.]

Let us avoid all unworthy notions, thoughts, and speeches of the great and glorious God, and speak reverently of those men that represent him.

Let us be obedient to all our superiors, whether natural, civil, or ecclesiastical.

Let us be thankful to God for his mercies, and to all men that are our benefactors.

Let us love all men, but especially let us be tender to our natural relations.

Let us to our power be faithful keepers of all promises we make to our neighbours, especially in matters of right and justice.

Let us take heed of all calumny and slandering of others, and speak evil of no man unnecessarily.

Lastly, and above all things, let us pray most earnestly for the love of God, the prevailing love of God, the love of God above all things. That we may see the perfect vanity of all other things, how short our enjoyment of them will be, how little good there is in them, and how infinitely good and excellent a being God is, and may therefore set our hearts upon him, and choose him for our everlasting portion.

These are the virtues, opposite to those vices, which the apostle notes as repugnant to *the power of godliness.* In the practice of these, *the power of godliness* consists, and without them, no *form of godliness* will avail us at the great day of accounts.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, adoration and worship, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XVI.[a]

A PROSPEROUS CONDITION IN THIS WORLD IS A BLESSING OF GOD, WHEREIN WE NOT ONLY MAY, BUT OUGHT TO REJOICE, SINCE IT IS GIVEN US BY GOD AS A PECULIAR TIME OF COMFORT AND REJOICING.

ECCLES. vii. 14.

In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.

THOUGH it be very hard in divers places of this book of Ecclesiastes to find out the connection of one sentence with the other; yet here a probable account may be given of the coherence of my text with the preceding verse. For therein the Wise Man exhorts us to *consider the work of God*, i. e. his work of providence, as by the whole context we are led to understand the words; to consider that God works still by his providence, and what he works; and he tells us, that upon this consideration, we shall be forced to say, *Who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?* i. e. God's providence is uncontrollable, and those evil afflictive things that happen to men in the world by his will cannot be avoided; those crooked things that are so

[a] [From the manner in which king Charles II. is mentioned, towards the end of this Sermon, it would appear to have been written after the death of that king.]

to us, that bend and turn from the way and course designed and desired by us, are directed by God, and what he will have thus *crooked, who can make straight?* To the same sense the Wise Man speaks, chap. i. 14, 15. *I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight.*

Upon this consideration, the Preacher in my text exhorts us all to attend to the work of God's providence in the various occurrences and dispensations thereof, whether prosperous or afflictive, and to accommodate and apply ourselves to them accordingly. *In the day of prosperity*, &c.

In the handling of which text I shall follow my usual method, first throughly to explain it, and then to raise some practical and useful observations from it.

In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider. In the Hebrew בְּיוֹם טוֹבָה, *in the good day*, or *the day of goodness*, i. e. in the day or time when the good things we desire happen to us. So the phrase is often used in Scripture; see particularly 1 Pet. iii. 10. *He that will love life and see good* (i. e. happy and prosperous) *days, let him refrain his tongue from evil.*

Be joyful. In the Hebrew הֱיֵה בְטוֹב, literally, *be thou in good.* The Septuagint renders it ξῆθι ἐν ἀγαθῷ, *live in good.* The vulgar Latin more clearly, *fruere bonis*, "enjoy thou the good things," which God hath given thee, with complacence and delight in them.

But in the day of adversity. In the Hebrew בְּיוֹם רָעָה, *in the evil day*, when afflictive and evil

things happen to thee. This is the known sense of the phrase of *evil days* in Scripture. So Gen. xlvii. 9. Jacob expressing to Pharaoh the troubles and afflictions of his past life, saith, *Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.* So the Wise Man again in his book of Ecclesiastes, chap. xii. 1. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* Where the days of old age are called *evil days,* because they are generally attended with sickness and infirmities, and other evils both of body and mind.

In the day of adversity consider. In the Hebrew רְאֵה, *see thou,* consider well the circumstances thou art in, and the duty incumbent on thee; think in what condition thou art, and what thou art to do in that state.

But must we not consider also *in the day of prosperity?* Must we then lay aside our reason and consideration, and drown ourselves in sensuality? God forbid. I shall shew you anon the necessary cautions and considerations we are to make use of in the *day of prosperity.*

But in the day of adversity we are especially concerned to *consider,* and to consider in a more especial manner. This is a season wherein divine Providence more loudly calls us to consideration, and to a deeper consideration. We have a like text to this in the Epistle of St. James, chap. v. 13. *Is any man among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.* Shall we hence conclude, that we are to pray only in the time of affliction? This were an absurd and wicked inference.

For we are to pray always. But the time of affliction is a more special season for prayer, for much and mighty, for frequent and fervent prayer.

Thus we say εὐχαίτε γερόντων, that *prayer is the proper province*, the business of old men, who are going out of the world. Not as if old men only were obliged to pray; but they being just ready to be called out of this world to God's tribunal, and upon the very confines of an eternal state, either of happiness or misery, are in a more special manner concerned to be very frequent and earnest in the exercise of this duty. *In the day of adversity consider.* This is a most proper season for consideration; and if men do not then consider, they never will. But to proceed with the words of the text.

God also hath set the one over against the other, i. e. God hath set our evil days, or days of adversity, against our days of prosperity, each against and with each other. Our life is not made up wholly either of prosperous or evil days, but is a mixture of both; one while we are in the day of prosperity, and then presently after in that of adversity; by such vicissitudes and changes, as the divine wisdom thinks fit, and most conducing to his glory and our good. And so I come to the last words of my text.

That man should find nothing after him, i. e. (as the most learned interpreters generally expound the words according to the ancient Latin translation,) *ut non inveniat homo contra eum justas quærimonias*, "that man might have no just cause of com-"plaining against him." For, according to the Hebrew idiom, to find something after another, signifies, upon examination, to find some fault in what

he hath done. According to this interpretation, the meaning of the words is this: "God hath so dis- "posed and ordered the whole course of man's life "on earth, so chequered and intermingled his pros- "perous and evil days one with the other, that, "upon a review of the whole, man himself will find "no reason to complain of him, or to blame either "his wisdom, or justice, or goodness in that dis- "posal."

So that in the whole, the text is (as an excellent person expresseth it) "an admirable advice to com- "ply with our present condition, and suit our minds "unto it;" because we cannot bring things to the bent of our own minds, and therefore had better study to conform our mind to our condition, whatsoever it be, whether prosperity or adversity; into which the divine wisdom hath divided our life, and so proportioned them one to the other, that none can justly find fault with his disposal, nor, all things considered, tell how to mend them or order them better.

The text thus explained readily yields us these following observations.

I. The good and prosperous days and times of our life are in God's design given to us as peculiar times of comfort and rejoicing.

II. The evil days, the days and times of our affliction and trouble, are in God's design the proper seasons of recollection and serious consideration.

III. The providence of God hath so contrived it, that our good and evil days, our days of prosperity and adversity, should be intermingled each with the other.

IV. This mixture of good and evil days is by the

divine Providence so proportioned, that it sufficiently justifies the dealings of God towards the sons of men, and obviates all our discontents and murmurings against him.

I. The good and prosperous days and times of our life are in God's design given to us as peculiar times of comfort and rejoicing.

In the day of prosperity be joyful. This is the proper time and season of rejoicing. Prosperity indeed is no prosperity but to him that rejoiceth in it; and we then only enjoy God's blessings, when we delight and take pleasure in them. And therefore the Preacher doth often in this book exhort us to rejoice in our present good things. Nay, God himself doth not only allow, but require and command his people to rejoice in the temporal blessings he bestows upon them. So Deut. xii. 7. *Ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye, and your households, wherein the Lord thy God hath blessed thee.* So again, God commands them, after their offering the first-fruits of their increase, to rejoice and delight themselves in the rest, Deut. xxvi. 11. *And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given thee.*

Nor is this merely Old Testament doctrine; for in the New Testament St. Paul tells rich men, that *God hath given them richly all things to enjoy*, [1 Tim. vi. 17.] Nay, our blessed Lord himself hath by his own example taught us, that mirth and cheerfulness in the use of the good things of this life, so it be in a due measure and in a due season, is allowable even to Christians. For he vouchsafed to be present, when invited, at a nuptial feast or wedding entertainment at Cana in Galilee. Neither was he morose in the

company; nay, he was so far from disliking or reproving their mirth, that he promoted and encouraged it; and when the fuel of it, their wine, failed, he was pleased to supply it with a miracle, as we read John ii. 1. &c.

Upon which text the excellent Bucer takes occasion severely to reprove those sour hypocrites of the anabaptistic sect in his time, who would not allow of any freer use of the good creatures of God, and would frown at any mirth in company, though never so innocent, when in the mean time they themselves were in secret guilty (as the event afterwards shewed) of the vilest abominations. Against these the holy and learned man gives this advice: "Thou "that truly fearest God, and sincerely lovest Christ, "value not these supercilious despisers of God's "blessings; know that every creature of God is "good, if thou use it with thanksgiving; avoid "luxury, but condemn not temperate or moderate "mirth and cheerfulness[c]." In short, Christianity, though it be a sober, yet it is no sullen or melancholy religion, as some melancholy men have fancied it, but admits as lawful even the joys and delights of this world, provided we use them lawfully; which is the thing I am next to shew you. For too many are apt to abuse this doctrine to licentiousness. It will be necessary therefore to annex some cautions to it, and they shall be these following.

1. We are to take care that we turn not the goodness of God into wantonness, by abusing the good

[c] Qui Deum vere times et absque fuco Christum amplexus es, mitte istos superciliosos beneficiorum Dei contemptores, scito omnem Dei creaturam bonam esse, modo cum gratiarum actione illa utaris. Luxum vita, temperatam hilaritatem ne damnato.

things of a prosperous condition to riot and excess. Prosperity, when thus abused, is no longer a blessing; it is so far from being so, that it becomes the greatest curse. It is far better to be the poorest and most miserable Lazarus in this world, than to be such a luxurious Dives, such a wicked man in prosperity. He that useth the good things of a prosperous estate to gluttony, drunkenness, and other inordinate pleasures, uses them not as a man, much less as a Christian, but as a *beast that perisheth.* Indeed such a man loses the true joy and comfort of God's blessings, by his excess in the use of them. The glutton and the drunkard makes himself sick with those good things which were given him for his health and refreshment. He turns the blessings of God into plagues and punishments, by darkening the serenity of his mind and understanding, and by destroying his health in this world, and his soul in the other. But I proceed to the second caution, which is this.

2. We are to take care in the use of the good things of prosperity, to avoid not only riot and excess, but also all immoderate affection towards them. We are not to set our hearts too much on the enjoyments of this life, nor let out our affections too far after them. We should remember the uncertainty of them, that though we have them to-day, we may lose them to-morrow. We should remember, that adversity usually follows close after prosperity; and therefore in my text, the Wise Man had no sooner said, *In the day of prosperity be joyful,* but he presently adds, *In the day of adversity consider.* And we should remember, that how prosperous soever our estate in this world may be, death will most

certainly within a few years, perhaps much sooner, put an end to it.

All the enjoyment that Christianity allows us, of the good things of this life, is the present fruition of them, without depending on them for the future; only securing us that we shall enjoy them, as long as God sees it fitting for us. And in this good men have a singular advantage over worldly and wicked men. The men of this world enjoy the good things of this life as their ultimate happiness, beyond which they look no farther; but good men use them as a *viaticum* or bait, as a present support and refreshment in their pursuit of a far greater happiness. And therefore when the good things of this life fail them, their hope is not deceived, they have another surer and better refuge, even the hope of a most perfect happiness in the life to come. The vicissitudes and changes of the things of this world, of prosperous into evil days, which grieve the minds, and sometimes break the hearts, of wŏrldly men, do scarce so much as trouble the righteous; this being no more than what they expected, and what they had long before prepared themselves for. Besides, they enjoy their present good things as the effects of God's favour and peculiar kindness to them; and they are sure that whenever he shall please to change the scene, it shall be for their good. And upon this account they are secure in their present enjoyments, and need not be solicitous or over-much concerned for the future.

But as for the ungodly, it is not so with them. They cannot so comfortably enjoy their present happiness, and they have no security for the future; but when they say Peace, peace, unto themselves, sud-

den destruction may (and, if they repent not, assuredly will) come upon them.

To conclude this consideration, it is an excellent advice that St. Paul gives us with relation to all temporal both enjoyments and afflictions, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. *This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, therefore, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.* As if he had said, Our life in this world being so short, it is no very great matter how it fares with us here; we should not be overmuch concerned about our state and condition, whatsoever it be, whether prosperous or afflictive. If we enjoy good things, let us not cleave in our affections too close to them, for they will ere long leave us with this present life. Or if we are in misery and trouble here, let us not be dejected; for if we be true Christians, death when it comes will put an end to all our sorrows, and place us in a state of unmixed and perfect happiness. Or more briefly thus: Whether we be in the number of those that *rejoice*, or of those that *weep*, in this world, let not either our joy or sorrow be immoderate, for they will both soon end in death; and a state of things will presently follow in the other life, wherein our joy or sorrow shall be everlasting. Let not therefore the little concerns of this transient world, but those far greater ones of the eternal state, take up our thoughts and affections, and possess our souls. I proceed to a third caution, which is this.

3. That we take care to use the good things of our prosperous days so, as to rejoice more in the goodness of God that gives them, than in the good things themselves.

This indeed is to *rejoice in the Lord;* this is to answer the design and end of God in giving those good things to us. For he gave them not to us that we should settle our affections on them; but that by them, as tokens of his love, we should be led to him, to love and serve him, and of a pledge of a far greater happiness which he will hereafter give us if we so do. The worldly man looks not to the giver, but to the gift itself; and, on the other side, the good man adores the giver more than the gift. The carnal man worships second causes, but the spiritual man gives all honour to the first Cause of all things. He thus reasons with himself: O the goodness of my God, who hath thus laden me with his blessings! And if God be thus good to me in this life, what may I not expect from him, if I continue faithfully to serve him, in the other! Great is my reward here, but how inexpressibly greater will it be hereafter! *O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!* Psalm xxxi. 19.

4. We should take care to use our prosperity as a furtherance, help, and encouragement to us in the service of God. This doubtless is the main design and end of the divine Providence, in bestowing the good things of prosperity upon us, that by them we might be animated and the better enabled to serve and glorify him who is the giver of them.

It is a remarkable text to this purpose that we read concerning Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xvii. 3, &c. *And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he*

walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; but sought to the Lord God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel: therefore the Lord established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart was lift up in the ways of the Lord: *moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah.*

Jehoshaphat's heart by his wonderful prosperity was not lifted up either against God or man; but, on the contrary, it was lifted up in the ways of the Lord; i. e. by his wealth and greatness he was encouraged and strengthened in his endeavour to promote the honour of God, by establishing his true worship, and destroying idolatry. Thus, when we are in prosperity, we must be raised by it to a zeal for the honour of God who gave it, and to a diligent study how to glorify the Author of all our blessings. The thoughts of the good man in prosperity will be like those of David, Psalm cxvi. 12, 13, 14. *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord,* &c.

5. We should take care, that our joy in the day of prosperity transport us not into pride, or a vain opinion of ourselves, and contempt of others that are below us. This caution against pride is frequently urged by the Holy Ghost in Scripture, and pressed on those that are in a prosperous state. So Deut. viii. 12, 14. *Beware, lest when thou hast eaten and art full,* &c. *then thine heart be lifted up.* So

St. Paul in his instructions to Timothy, the first Epistle, chap. vi. 17. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded.*

We must take care that our prosperity be adorned with true humility; imitating herein the holy patriarch Jacob, who from a poor and small beginning, being blessed by God with a wonderful affluence of the good things of this life, thus humbly addresses himself to God the giver of them: Gen. xxxii. 10. *I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.*

We should remember, that we have nothing but what we have received from God, as the effect of his mere mercy, and not any desert of our own; and that there are multitudes of good men, and some of them far better than ourselves, who have far less of the good things of this life than we have: and from thence we should learn not to overvalue ourselves upon account of any outward blessing, and that worldly prosperity in itself is no distinguishing mark of God's special favour. It will prove to us, according as we use or abuse it.

We should remember, lastly, the strict account we must render to God of those temporal good things which he hath given us. And if we do well consider this, we shall be so far from being lifted up into pride by our prosperity, that we shall rather be possessed with a holy fear and care how to discharge our duties therein.

6. And lastly, we must be sure to join our prosperity with charity; i. e. so rejoice in our own prosperity, as not to forget the adversity of others. The

rich man in the parable, Luke xvi. went not to hell for his being rich, or for the mere enjoyment of his riches, but for his luxury and excess in the use of them, and for his uncharitableness and want of pity to poor Lazarus in his distress and misery.

It is the highest ingratitude, and the greatest sin, for a man to receive abundance of good things from God, and to do little or no good to his neighbour. We do not rejoice in our prosperity aright, unless we cause the poor and miserable to rejoice with us, by a charitable relief of their wants and necessities. And therefore it is remarkable, that God himself, at the same time when he bids us *rejoice in the good things which he hath given us*, requires us to make others also, the poor and indigent, to be partakers of our joy; he will by no means allow us in our prosperity to rejoice alone. So Deut. xxvi. 11. *And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you.* So again, Deut. xvi. 11. *And thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the fatherless and the widow that are among you.*

In a word, that joy in the day of prosperity that is not accompanied with this charity, shall at last end in the greatest and most dismal sorrow. Hell will undoubtedly be the portion of the prosperous uncharitable man, as our Saviour plainly teaches us in the forementioned parable.

All these cautions are necessary to be observed in our rejoicing *in the day of prosperity*. And with

these cautions we may and ought to rejoice in those temporal blessings and good things which the divine Providence hath bestowed upon us. I shall now only apply this first observation as thus explained, and so for the present conclude.

1. This discourse serves to reprove those who are so far from rejoicing, that they are sullen and discontented even *in the day of prosperity.*

God hath blessed them with health and wealth, with peace and plenty, and yet they have no peace in themselves, but are disquieted and unsatisfied. They want, and would have they know not what; and are troubled, they know not well why or wherefore. They envy them that are above them; they think themselves to be in a worse condition than those that are really below them.

If indeed, in the midst of their outward prosperity, they were inwardly troubled for the concern of their souls, they were to be excused, yea commended. But this is not the case of the men with whom we have now to do. Our reproof is directed against those who are discontented in and with their outward prosperity, either because it is not so great as that of others, or because there is something wanting in it; as indeed there will be always something defective in the best estate and condition of men in this world. For the royal Psalmist assures us, Psalm xxxix. 5. *Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Every man in every state* (even the most prosperous) *is in every respect vanity*[d]; i. e. the best condition of man in this life, compared to the perfect happiness of the other, is perfect vanity, so that there is no such thing as prosperity in this

[d] Omnis homo in omni statu est omnino vanitas.

world, if that estate only shall be accounted prosperous wherein there is nothing at all defective or wanting. But this is a very false notion of prosperity. He that hath many blessings and good things of this life, wherein he may rejoice, though he want, or fancy that he wants many other things, yea though he be under some inconveniences or lesser troubles, yet this man lives *in the day of prosperity*, if he could but think so, and to him undoubtedly belongs the advice in my text: *In the day of prosperity be joyful.* But alas! some men will never know, can never tell when *the day of prosperity* is come; though they be never so prosperous, yet they will still think themselves to be miserable; and what providence can make such men happy? What shall I say to them? They highly deserve, they dearly need, they loudly call for *the day of adversity*, that by their own sad experience they might learn the real difference between prosperity and adversity, and what the one as well as the other is, and so at last come to know when they are well.

2. This serves for the reproof of such who being in prosperity deny themselves the enjoyment of it, and in the midst of their happiness are miserable through their own penuriousness.

They tantalize themselves, and being up to the chin in an affluence of the good things of this life, will scarce afford themselves one sip of the flowing stream. These men are elegantly described by the Wise Man in this book of Ecclesiastes, chap. vi. 1, 2. *There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: a man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he de-*

sireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease. This man, in the midst of his abundance and riches, can scarce afford himself necessaries. He is so close a keeper of his wealth, that he keeps it, not only from others, but even from himself. And for whom? Commonly for a stranger, one that hath no affinity to him: and who not only eats of his plenty, but eats it out, i. e. consumes and devours it; it being the usual fate of the miser to have a prodigal for his heir. What shall we say to the men of this wretched temper? they will live miserably here, as it were in despite of God's good providence; and without repentance, through the righteous judgment of God, they shall be for ever miserable hereafter, whether they will or no.

3. And lastly; Let all such as rejoice in a prosperous state be sure to temper their joy with a due care, lest their prosperity betray them into sin and folly. Let them always remember the cautions before given to this purpose. And let not any man presume so far on his own integrity and constancy of resolution, as to think he needs them not.

The Almighty God, the Searcher of hearts, who knows our frame and temper infinitely better than we do ourselves, doth frequently in his holy word caution even his own people, and earnestly press them to take great heed, lest they be corrupted by their prosperity. So Deut. vi. 10, 11, 12. *And it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers*, &c. *When thou shalt have eaten and be full; then beware lest thou forget the Lord*, &c. Again, Deut. viii. ver. 7, to ver. 12. inclusive. *For the Lord thy*

God bringeth thee into a good land, &c. *When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he giveth thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: lest when thou hast eaten and art full,* &c. *then thy heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God.* And ver. 18. *But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth,* &c.

In these and the like places of Scripture, the good and gracious God represents himself to us after the manner of men in compliance with our infirmity. He seems to give his people prosperity *tremula manu,* "with a trembling hand," fearing at the same time, when he intends to do them good, lest he should do them hurt; as if he had said, Behold! I give you these outward good things, which men think very good and desirable, as indeed they are, if a good use be made of them; but as good as they are, there is danger in the use and enjoyment of them; therefore look to yourselves, and take heed you do not abuse them to your own hurt. My thoughts in giving you these things are thoughts of love and kindness; I design them as blessings to you; but beware, lest through your own folly you turn them into a curse. This, I say, is the plain sense and meaning of those places of Scripture, wherein God gives such repeated cautions to men, to whom he gives plenty and prosperity.

It is a remarkable passage in the Life of the excellent Dr. Hammond, that upon the approach of the restoration of king Charles the Second to his king-

doms, knowing the great advancement in the church that was already designed for him, though he rejoiced as much as any man in the public happiness, yet he was really troubled at the nearness of his own temporal felicity. He started back from that which others hunt after and eagerly pursue, and was afraid of what most men passionately desire, a prosperous state; which he expressed to one of his friends with the greatest concernment of an earnest melting passion in these words: "I must confess," said he, "I "never saw the time in all my life, wherein I could "so cheerfully say my *Nunc dimittis* as now. In- "deed I do dread prosperity, I do really dread it." And it pleased God to give him his wish and choice: for some weeks before his majesty landed in this kingdom, that holy soul was translated to a better place. I doubt not but it was an excess of humility in that incomparable person, which caused these his fears. For certainly if any man, one of his confirmed, radicated, and even heroic virtue, might and would have been very safe in a prosperous condition. But indeed, to the generality of men, prosperity is questionless full of hazard and danger.

Hence Solomon, the wisest of mere mortal and fallen men, tells us, *The prosperity of fools shall destroy them*, Prov. i. 32. Foolish men are ruined and undone by their prosperity; and therefore it is a wise and weighty petition which we have in the excellent Litany of our church, "In all time of our "tribulation, in all time of our wealth, Good Lord "deliver us." We are in great danger, not only in the time of want, but also in the time of wealth; not only *in the day of adversity*, but also *in the day*

of prosperity; and from this danger we are earnestly to pray that God would deliver us.

Let this therefore be your daily prayer; and if with this prayer you keep in memory the cautions before given you, you are safe. But especially be sure you forget not the fifth caution, to join your prosperity with charity. Without this, I am persuaded, (saith an excellent author,) the danger of prosperity neither can nor ever will be avoided, i. e. without being fruitful in good works, and liberal and openhanded to the relief of the poor, and also to the furtherance of all pious and sacred uses, as occasion offers itself. It is St. Paul's charge, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate,* &c. To which Solomon's advice is to be added, Prov. iii. 9. *Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.* God requires this as a tribute, whereby we should acknowledge him to be the giver of what we have. "Away with "words, (as the same author goes on,) or mere "verbal thanksgivings. God is thy landlord, and he "requires a lord's rent; those who use not to pay it, "will soon forget who is their landlord; which is "the proper fountain of all the evil that comes by "abundance." Nay, he that thinks this tribute of his goods is not due to God, doth already disclaim his landlord, and deny God to be his Lord.

The sum of all that I have said upon this first observation is this: A prosperous condition in this world is a blessing of God, wherein we not only may, but ought to rejoice; and I think I may safely say, we

sin if we do not: for it is the command of God in my text, *In the day of prosperity be joyful.* But yet prosperity is then only a real blessing, when we are truly thankful to God for it; when we take a moderate delight and satisfaction in it; when we soberly make use of the good things God hath given us for ourselves, and out of our plenty supply the poverty of others, according to our proportion and ability; when we walk humbly with our God and with our neighbour, and honour the Lord with our substance; and, in a word, when we make use of our temporal prosperity, as a help and furtherance to our eternal happiness.

I conclude all with the excellent collect and prayer of our church on the fourth Sunday after Trinity.

" O God, the Protector of all that trust in thee, " without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy; " increase and multiply upon us thy mercy: that, " thou being our Ruler and Guide, WE MAY SO " PASS THROUGH THINGS TEMPORAL, THAT WE " FINALLY LOSE NOT THE THINGS ETERNAL. " Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's " sake, our Lord and Saviour."

To whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON XVII.

ADVERSITY THE PROPER SEASON OF SERIOUS CONSIDERATION; AND SO CONTRIVED BY THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD, THAT IT SHOULD BE INTERMIXED WITH PROSPERITY; AND THIS MIXTURE OF GOOD AND EVIL SO PROPORTIONED BY THE SAME PROVIDENCE, THAT IT OBVIATES ALL DISCONTENT AND MURMURING AGAINST GOD.

ECCLES. vii. 14.

In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.

IN my entrance on this text, having shewn the connection of it with the preceding verses, and fully explained it, I raised these plain and useful propositions and observations from it.

I. The good and prosperous days and times of our life are in God's design given to us, as peculiar times of comfort and rejoicing.

II. The evil days, the days and times of our affliction and trouble, are in God's design the proper seasons of recollection and serious consideration.

III. The providence of God hath so contrived it, that our good and evil days, our days of prosperity and adversity, should be intermingled each with the other.

IV. This mixture of good and evil days is by the divine Providence so proportioned, that it sufficiently justifies the dealings of God towards the sons

of men, and obviates all our discontents and murmurings against him.

I have already despatched the first of these observations, and therein endeavoured fully to instruct you in the right use of a prosperous state. I proceed now to the second observation.

II. The evil days, the days and times of our affliction and trouble, are in God's design the proper seasons of recollection and serious consideration.

But in the day of adversity consider. And indeed if then we do not consider, we shall never consider; if sadness will not make us serious, nothing will. But what are we to consider *in the day of adversity?*

1. We are to consider from whom the adversity or affliction comes. And here we are to look above all secondary causes and instruments to God, who is above all, by whose either efficacious operation, or wise and just permission, every evil of affliction, that befalls us, happens to us. This is the plain doctrine of God himself, by his prophet Amos, chap. iii. 6. *Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?* No, certainly. God is the great Disposer of all the evils of affliction that happen to us. This consideration will be of mighty force to make us submit to the present adversity or affliction under which we labour. It is God's doing, (by whatever means or instruments it comes to pass,) and therefore we must submit. This was the argument which induced holy Job to a patient submission, Job i. 21. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.* He looked not to the secondary causes that had robbed him of his wealth, and his children too, for whom his

wealth was provided, but to God the supreme Governor and Disposer of all things. It is true, sometimes we bring affliction and trouble on ourselves, through our own sin and folly. But even in this case, there is a hand of God, for some former sin or sins, justly permitting us to fall into such sin and folly. Wherefore in such cases we are indeed to blame ourselves; but we are also to acknowledge the righteous judgment of God, and seriously to inquire after that sin which provoked God to leave us, and suffer us to fall into that folly.

2. We are to consider for what God sends the adversity or affliction on us. And here generally it is true, that it is sent for some sin or sins of ours that have deserved it. Generally, I say, but not always. For Job's afflictions were sent on him from God, by way of trial of his virtues. Yet even in this case, there was some antecedent or foregoing sin that might deserve those afflictions, though there had been no occasion of trial. And therefore Job himself, though he would never acknowledge any insincerity or hypocrisy, or greater crime, for which those evils befell him; yet he often acknowledgeth himself to be a sinner, that had deserved as much as he suffered, with respect to the strict justice and righteousness of God. But generally, I say, it is true, that our afflictions come upon us for our sins, and therefore we ought to bear them patiently, according to that of the prophet, *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him*, Micah vii. 9.

3. We are to consider with what end and design God sends adversity and affliction on us. It is with a design of love and kindness, unless we be such as

have continually hardened our hearts against former afflictions, and thereby rendered ourselves incorrigible. Excepting this case, all afflictions that befall us are designed in love and kindness to us, to bring us to repentance, or to further our repentance, and make us better by a greater hatred of sin, and by a more zealous prosecution of virtue and goodness.

This doctrine is plainly taught us by a prophet of the Lord, Lament. iii. 32, 33. *But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies; for he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men:* as if he had said, God doth not afflict men for affliction's sake, as if he took delight in their sorrows, but out of kindness and love to do them good, to make them good when nothing else will. So the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xii. from verse 5 to 12 inclusively: *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening*

for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Let this then be fixed in our minds, and the settled resolution of our thoughts, that our afflictions are the effects of God's goodness and lovingkindness to us, and then we shall not only bear them patiently, but receive them thankfully, accounting our afflictions to be mercies, according to that of David, Psalm cxix. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*

4. And lastly, *In the day of adversity* we are to consider how and by what means we may be freed from our adversity. For God doth not require us to lie down, like the brute creature under his burden, without any endeavour to be eased of it; but allows us wisely to consider of the means to free ourselves from it. And here the best, yea the only way, is to make God our hope and refuge; and to consider that as he sent the affliction, so he only is able to remove it; and that he is as willing as he is able to do this, if in the first place we apply ourselves to him accordingly, by unfeigned repentance, by earnest prayer, and by an humble acknowledgment of his righteous hand in our present distress, and then use such lawful means as Providence offers to us. This is the right way of freeing ourselves from adversity. But there are other ways that vain men seek to; they endeavour to be rid of their poverty by wronging or stealing from others, and of their losses by having recourse to the instruments of Satan. This is a sin which every Christian ought to dread and tremble at. When God throws thee down, beg him to raise

thee up again; when he smites, look to him alone for the cure. Hear what God himself says, Deut. xxxii. 39. *See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.*

Thus we are to consider *in the day of adversity*, who sent the adversity, for what it was sent, with what end and design it is inflicted on us, and how we may be freed from it. It is sent by God, whatever the instrumental causes may be; it is generally sent as a punishment for our sin, though sometimes chiefly by way of trial. It is sent with a gracious design of love and kindness to us; and the only way to be freed from it, so as either to be wholly rid of it, or to have it sanctified unto us, is to have recourse to God by faith and repentance. To apply this.

1. This may serve for the reproof of those, who *in the day of adversity* are so far from considering, that they are stupid and senseless, and have no regard at all to the hand of God upon them, but harden their hearts against him; and, after one affliction upon another, are still as wretched and as wicked as ever, and never consider either the true cause of their affliction, or the right way of removing it. Flee they will to their pleasures or diversions, or to any thing else, rather than enter into a serious and religious consideration of the causes and ends of their present affliction. The prophet Isaiah from God denounces a woe against these men, chap. v. 11, 12. *Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue till night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, are in their feasts:*

but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands; i. e. Woe unto them that give themselves to sensual pleasures, even *in the day of adversity*, the time of serious recollection and consideration; and even then are so far from being alarmed and awakened to repentance, that they have no regard at all to the afflicting hand of God, either upon themselves or others. These men offer the highest affront to the almighty and most merciful God; they tremble not at his power and justice, and despise his mercy; all these attributes of his being concerned in their affliction.

2. This may serve for the reproof of those, who, on the other side, are too sensible of their adversity in the day thereof, so sensible, as to be driven almost into despair and distraction. These men, when God smites them, cry out too loudly, and are put into a strange and unreasonable passion, excluding all friendly advice and counsel. They are little better than distracted persons in their affliction, especially if it be a great one, vexing and afflicting themselves beyond measure, and all to no purpose. For religious consideration is the only remedy in the day of adversity. *In the day of adversity* do not fret thyself, but *consider*. Against both these extremes *in the day of adversity*, both that of stupidity and that of despondency, of being sensible of the afflicting hand of God either too little or not at all, or too much, the wisest of men, speaking by the wisdom of God, excellently cautions us, Prov. iii. 11. *My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction.* The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews renders the last clause thus, *nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.*

Here are two extremes noted, which men respectively are apt to fall into *in the day of adversity*, either to despise the afflicting hand of God, or to faint and sink under it; and both are to be avoided as we love our souls, and desire a happy issue out of the affliction. I now proceed to the third observation, which was this.

III. The providence of God hath so contrived it, that our good and evil days, our days of prosperity and adversity, should be intermingled each with the other.

For my text saith, *God hath set the one over against the other*, i. e. *the day of adversity* against *the day of prosperity*, each against the other, so as to answer and succeed one another in the course of our lives.

It is observed by some, that all God's works, both of creation and providence in the present state of things, are ἀντίστοιχα, "set in opposition one against "the other." After darkness we see the light, the pleasing, welcome light; and after we have enjoyed the light a while, melancholy darkness follows; and night and day succeed one the other by a never-failing revolution. Fair and cloudy days are intermingled in our calendar. Our age in this world is made up of so many summers and winters; the sun one season being to us in his exaltation, and then another part of the year in his declension; one while the sun scorcheth us, and another the frost nips us: only the gracious providence of God hath so ordered it, that we pass from one of these extremes to the other not all of a sudden, but by the intermediate and leisurely spaces of spring and autumn; we

go from the winter through the spring to the summer, and then from the summer through the autumn back again into the winter.

One while we sleep, and are the images of dead men; and anon we awake, and as it were live again, and are shadows of our future resurrection.

The very constitution of our bodies is made up of contraries, heat and cold, moisture and drought, perpetually conflicting with each other. Yea we live and breathe by the same vicissitude of contraries, by a systole and diastole; our hearts one while extending and lifting up themselves, and presently again contracting themselves and falling; and all our other pulses follow the same method.

And thus it is in God's works of providence, *the day of prosperity* and *the day of adversity*, our good and evil days, interchangeably succeed each the other. No man on this side hell so miserable, but that he hath some lucid intervals, some intervening spaces of joy and comfort; and, on the other hand, no man is so perfectly happy in this world, but that some evil accidents now and then befall him, to give an alloy to his happiness. Our life is chequered with white and black, with sad and gladsome days. And every man, that hath lived any time in the world, is convinced by his own experience of the truth of what the Wise Man tells us in the text already mentioned, Eccles. iii. 4. that *there is a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance.* No man's time is wholly taken up either by joy or sorrow, but each of these hath his share therein, according to that proportion which God in his infinite wisdom sees most meet. And so I pass from

this to the next observation; which when I have handled, I shall make application of both together, and so conclude my discourse on this text.

IV. This mixture of good and evil days is by the divine Providence so proportioned, that it sufficiently justifies the dealings of God toward the sons of men, and obviates all our discontents and murmurings against him.

This I shewed you is the most probable meaning of those words in the text, *God hath set the one*, &c. to the end that *man should find nothing after him*, i. e. *God:* viz. That the mixture of our good and evil days, one with the other, is such, that when in the issue a man shall trace the footsteps of the divine Providence, and recollect all God's dealings towards him, he will be able to find no fault in the whole course of that providence; nor shall he justly blame either the justice, or wisdom, or goodness of God. He shall be forced to confess, that he had as much prosperity as was useful, and no more adversity than was necessary for him: the result whereof is this, that it is man's best way and course to commit and submit himself to the divine disposal, and entirely to acquiesce in it, in all the periods of his life on earth.

This was the very argument whereby holy Job brought himself to a submission unto God's providence, even in the greatest trial and calamity, Job ii. 10. *What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* As if he should have said, We are not to expect that it should be always day, and never night, that the sun of prosperity should continually shine on us, without any cloud intervening, that a perpetual course of good things should happen to us without interruption,

that we should see only good days, and never any evil ones; this is a perfectly vain and foolish conceit.

There is a great deal of reason and justice, yea goodness and mercy, in that providence of God, whereby our good and evil days are mingled with each other; as will appear by these few following considerations.

1. If all the days of our life were without the evil of sin, we might have some colour of reason to expect they should be without the evil of adversity also; though this would be only a colour of reason; for God may justly afflict an innocent creature, *jure dominii*, by his right of dominion and sovereignty over all his creatures, at least as to a temporary affliction, which he recompenseth with an equivalent or a greater good. But I say, if we had no days of sin, it were more tolerable in us to expect that no days of adversity should befall us. If we were all good in our carriage towards God, we might presume that God would be all good in his providence to us; and that if our obedience were uniform, even, and uninterrupted, that our prosperity should be so too. But, alas! it is quite otherwise. Many, very many have been our days of sin, and therefore we have no reason at all to complain, if we see some days of sorrow. The Wise Man, in this very same book of Ecclesiastes, and in this same chapter, viz. chap. vii. 20. tells us, *There is not a just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not;* i. e. that hath done good so evenly and constantly, but that sometime he hath fallen into sin. No man's life so fair, as to have no moles or blemishes; no man's escutcheon so untainted, but that it hath some blots in it. *There is not a just man* (בארץ) *upon earth.* The just indeed,

the saints in heaven, do not, cannot sin, but are ἀναμάρτητοι, *sinless* as the angels of God. And accordingly in heaven, where there is no sin, there shall be no sorrow, but perfect, perpetual, uninterrupted felicity and happiness; but on *earth there is not a just man who sins not.* And if the best of men do evil, shall we think it strange that the best of men suffer evil? But, alas! the generality even of good men have a greater abundance of dross in them, that must be purged away by adversity and affliction. And shall we grumble at a little sorrow, that have so much sin? Yea rather let us bless God, who hath spared us so much, and punished us so little, and confess the truth with the people of God in the book of Ezra, chap. ix. 13. *Thou, O God, hast punished us less* (far less) *than our iniquities deserve.*

2. Consider, that our good days are generally more in number than our evil days, our days of prosperity (such, I mean, as is suitable to our condition and circumstances) than our days of adversity. This is most certain, though most of us are apt to cast up our accounts otherwise. How many days (of at least competent) health have we enjoyed for one day of grievous sickness! How many days of ease, for one of pain! How many blessings, for a few crosses! For one danger that hath surprised us, how many scores of dangers have we escaped, and some of them very narrowly! But, alas! we write our mercies in the dust, but our afflictions we engrave in marble; our memories serve us too well to remember the latter, but we are strangely forgetful of the former. And this is the greatest cause of our unthankfulness, discontent, and murmuring.

It is storied of a priest of Neptune, the reputed god of the sea among the heathens, that when he shewed to one of Neptune's votaries the many offerings hung up in his temple, of those that by their devotions to him had been saved from shipwreck; the votary answered, "But where are the offerings "of the many more worshippers of Neptune, that "have perished in the waves of the sea, and been "lost in the deep?" But in the present case we may reverse the story. When men represent the many evils that they have suffered from our God, the only true God, so dismally as if their whole life had been a continual tragedy, and a perpetual scene of sorrow and calamity; we may justly bespeak every such person thus: But, O unthankful man! where are all the blessings that God hath bestowed on thee? where are all the good things thou hast received from thy God? Hast thou utterly lost the far greater catalogue of his mercies? Are these quite out of thy remembrance? For shame keep a better account of God's dealings towards thee, and let not one affliction, though very grievous, drown and swallow up an hundred mercies conferred on thee!

3. Consider that there is none of our days so evil, but that there is some mixture of mercy and of God's goodness in them. Pure and unmixed evil is the portion only of the damned, there is no such thing to be found on this side hell. In this life it is most certain, that God doth, as the prophet expresseth it, Hab. iii. 2. *in wrath remember mercy*, tempering our evils with something of good to allay them. At the same time we have reason to complain to God, we have no reason to complain of him, but much to praise and bless his holy name for those mercies,

which at that very time we enjoy from him. Generally if we ourselves are sick, our children and many of our friends and relations are well. When we want health, other circumstances for the most part occur to render our sickness more easy and supportable. If we lose our sight, our memory strangely serves to supply that sad defect. If we cannot see, we can hear; and if we cannot hear, we can see; and all our senses together seldom fail us, till death seize us as his prey. If one of our children miscarry, and prove a child of sorrow to us, another doth well, and is our joy and comfort. If some insult over our calamity, others pity and assist us in it. If some unjustly calumniate and reproach us, there are others that will do right to our reputation. And finally, there is no so grievous outward affliction befalling any of God's faithful servants, but that there is still an answerable inward assistance and comfort administered from God to support him under it: that promise of God to St. Paul being not peculiar to him, but extending itself to every good man in the same or the like circumstances, 2 Cor. xii. 9. *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*

4. And lastly, consider that adversity is needful to correct the errors of prosperity. If we knew how to use our good days well, we should have none, or fewer evil days. But, alas! we do not. The art of using prosperity aright, none of us are perfectly skilled in; and therefore it is necessary that days of adversity should be intermingled with our days of prosperity, that the one might remedy the evils of the other. For,

1. If all our days were days of prosperity, we

should be apt to look on prosperity either as a debt due to our very nature, or as the portion of our fate, not acknowledging the free goodness of God as the fountain of it. But on the other side, whenever and anon we taste of adversity, we are thereby convinced, that prosperity is no inseparable property of our nature, or necessary effect of our fate and destiny, but the gift of some free cause, that one while distributes good things to us, another while evil things, as he pleaseth; i. e. the gift of God.

2. If all our days were days of prosperity, without interruption, we should not duly prize our prosperity, nor taste the fuller sweetness of it. For such is our folly, that we learn to prize good things, chiefly by our want of them, and by experience of the evils opposite to them: *Contraria juxta se posita*, &c. "Contraries set against and compared with "each other, appear in their clearest colours." How sweet doth health taste and relish after a sharp and tedious sickness! How doth that man rejoice in a moderate fortune, as if it were riches and abundance, that is newly emerged and crept out of want and poverty! How welcome is our own home, though but homely, after durance in a house of imprisonment! How doth that man prize his safety, and the very liberty of treading firmly on the common earth, that hath newly escaped the danger of shipwreck! In a word, how thankful are we even for common mercies, after we have learned the worth of them, by a dear and sad want of them!

3. If we ourselves knew no adversity, we should be unapt to pity others in their adversity, which yet is a great duty incumbent on all Christians. We shall never know how to compassionate the evils

that our brethren suffer, unless we ourselves have some time or other felt the very same or the like evils ourselves. Christ himself, as man, learned compassion to his brethren by his own sufferings, Heb. ii. 17, 18. How much more do we sinners need this experience, to make us pitiful and compassionate to others in their calamity!

4. If we never saw any days of adversity, we should want an occasion and opportunity of exercising some of our chiefest virtues, and consequently of receiving the fuller reward of them. What occasion of patience in suffering evils, if no evil happened to us! What opportunity of submitting to God's will, if things still fell out according to our own!

5. If we knew no adversity, we should want one of the surest trials, and consequently the certain comfort of our sincerity. *The day of adversity* is the day of trial, whether our religion towards God be sound at the bottom. If we can still love God, even when he smites us, and writes bitter things against us, and seems to hate us; if we can still trust on him, and cleave to him, though he seem to *slay us*, (as Job expresseth it,) then is our love to him, and trust on him, sincere and solid. And from the knowledge of our sincerity, a far greater comfort arises to us, than all our worldly prosperity can possibly afford us. Nay, this will sweeten our succeeding prosperity; for if we find that we have loved God in adversity, we may be sure that our following prosperity is an effect of his love to us.

6. And lastly, if all the days of our life were days of prosperity, we should certainly love this life too much, and set our hearts upon this present world, not minding or seeking after, as we ought, the

things of a better life. And therefore God hath so tempered the occurrences of this life, so mingled our days of prosperity with intervening days of adversity, that we should not fix our habitation or place our happiness here; but that we should *so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal.* If without interruption we enjoyed our imaginary heaven here, we should never at all, or very carelessly, mind and seek after our real heaven hereafter; and so should be undone for ever.

Upon all these accounts it is apparent, that there is a great deal of justice, equity, wisdom, yea and goodness of God, in that providence of his, whereby he hath set *the day of adversity* against *the day of prosperity*, intermingling the occurrences of this life with good and evil.

I shall now conclude my whole discourse upon this text with a short exhortation.

Let us all wisely accommodate ourselves to this mixed providence of God; and under which soever of its dispensations we are or shall be, whether that of prosperity, or the other of adversity, let us endeavour to do our duty, and to answer the design of Providence therein. When we are in a prosperous state, let us rejoice and be thankful; but let our joy be moderate, remembering that adversity may, and some time or other will come upon us, and accordingly preparing ourselves for it. It is a common vanity of men in prosperity, to depend too much upon its stability and continuance, to grow secure, and lay aside all due and serious thoughts of future troubles. Even holy David confesses himself to have been some time guilty of this folly, Psalm xxx. 6, 7.

And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was in trouble.

When Saul was dead, and David was crowned king over Judah and Israel, he then thought himself in a state of prosperity, as stable and immoveable as Mount Sion, on which his royal palace stood, and fancied that all his troubles were now at an end. But he was deceived; God after that hid his face, drew a cloud, a black and dismal cloud, of trouble and affliction over all his splendour and glory. For as after his first being crowned king of Judah, he was for seven years together exercised with troubles from his enemies of the house of Saul; so after his second coronation, as king both of Judah and Israel, other troubles assaulted him; the most pungent of which was the unnatural rebellion and most miserable ruin of his son Absalom. By this example (to which many others might be added) let us learn not to build too much upon our present prosperity; and though we may seem to be in the most firm and settled state of secular happiness, yet not to be so vain as to think ourselves secure from all future troubles.

This is most certain, (howsoever we may escape in the general course of our lives,) there is one day of adversity which will infallibly come upon every one of us, and that is the day of our death; a day that will try the faith, patience, and fortitude of the best and most prepared Christian; but indeed will be a day of the deepest adversity to all such as are not beforehand, by a lively faith and effectual repentance, provided against it.

Let such considerations as these frequently enter into our thoughts, and check and restrain all excess and extravagance of our joy *in the day of prosperity.*

On the other side, in our adversity let us neither be insensible nor too sensible of it; let us consider, but not despair; let us submit to God's will, trust in his goodness, amend what is amiss in our lives; and in this way comfort ourselves with the assured hope of a good day to follow, if not here, yet certainly hereafter.

In a word, let us not fix upon any state of things in this world; for here there is nothing certain, nothing uniform, nothing constant; our present life being a variable, mixed state, made up of joy and sorrow; of days of prosperity, and days of adversity too, by very uncertain vicissitudes, and turns succeeding each other. Let us therefore raise our hearts above this world, and before all things desire, and with our greatest labour and diligence endeavour, after that unmixed state of happiness proposed to us in the other world; and if we do so, we shall there meet with no adversity, no trouble or sorrow at all, but shall have all joy, and rejoice always even to eternal ages.

To which blessed state, God of his infinite mercy bring us all, through the merits of his only Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, adoration and worship, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON XVIII.

THAT IT IS A VERY SINFUL AND VAIN THING FOR ANY MAN SO TO GLORY IN HIS OWN WISDOM, STRENGTH, OR WEALTH, AS TO PLACE HIS TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN EITHER OR ALL OF THEM.

JER. ix. 23, 24.

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

IT is generally agreed by the best interpreters, that my text hath reference to the preceding verses, even from the beginning of this chapter. Wherein the holy prophet predicts and foretells things so direful to God's people, and that with so feeling a sense of them, that he himself seems to have suffered little less in the prophecy, than they should in the event of it. He begins, verse 1, thus: *O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!* As if he had said, I think I can never grieve sufficiently for the dismal slaughter and destruction which I foresee will shortly befall the people of the Jews. *My people*, i. e. my dear countrymen, the people to whom God hath sent me, as his prophet, the people whom I affectionately love,

and whose welfare I wish as much as, yea, much more than mine own.

In the following verses he most elegantly and pathetically describes both the great sins of the Jews, the causes of God's judgments, and the judgments themselves that should come upon them for those sins; one while sadly reflecting on the one, and then with a no less passion of sorrow passing to the other.

And after all, as well knowing the obdurate and stubborn temper of the Jews, that they would be apt to slight even this dreadful prophecy of his, and fancy that they might escape the threatened destruction, either by their policy and cunning, or by their power and strength, or by their wealth and riches: he, or rather the divine Spirit in him, seasonably obviates and meets with this vain conceit of theirs in the words of my text: *Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.* As if he had said, This calamity which I predict, no wisdom of yours can prevent, no power or strength of yours shall be able to resist, nor are all your riches and treasures sufficient to redeem you from it; and therefore trust not in any or all of these, but make God your refuge, who only can save you from the evils threatened, or preserve you under them.

This is the connection of my text with what went before in this chapter. I shall now immediately be-

take myself to the text itself; which I shall first carefully explain, and then raise my observations upon it.

And first for the explanation, *Thus saith the Lord.* A solemn preface of God's holy prophets to conciliate authority, and to excite the reverent attention of their hearers to what they are about to say; and it always leads the way to something of great weight and moment following, such as is the matter of my text. And accordingly let me bespeak, yea in the name of God command and challenge, the awful attention of all that hear me this day, from the greatest to the least; for it is not I say it, but *Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches,* &c.

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom. By wisdom may be understood all that knowledge universally, which may seem any way perfective of the mind of man, besides the saving knowledge of God. But by the context we are led to that wisdom especially, which we call prudence, and hath respect to the actions and affairs of human life, and consists in a due contrivance and disposition of means, in order to the avoiding the evils we fear, and the attaining the good things we desire in this world.

Neither let the mighty man glory in his might. By *might* most interpreters understand bodily strength or valour. And accordingly the Chaldee paraphrast on my text brings the example of Solomon, the wisest of all men, falling from God's favour, to dissuade us from trusting in our own wisdom; the example of Samson, the strongest of men, to shew us the vanity

of bodily strength; and the instance of Ahab, the richest of the kings of Israel, to deter us from confiding in our wealth and riches; of which also Solomon, king both of Judah and Israel, was a greater instance.

And yet methinks the might here spoken of may be extended farther, even to all that power and interest whatsoever which a man hath, or is able to make in this world. Let a man be never so mighty and powerful, either in his own strength and valour, or in his friends and dependents on him, or otherwise, yet he is a fool, if he presumptuously glories in this his might and power, as if it could be his security and protection without the favour of God. What is meant by the rich man and riches I need not tell you. But what is it for a man to glory either in his wisdom, or in his might, or in his riches? In the Hebrew it is אַל־יִתְהַלֵּל, *let him not praise himself.* Which the Seventy translate as we do, μὴ καυχάσθω, *let him not glory;* though otherwhere they themselves render the verb by the Greek ἀγαλλιᾶν, *greatly to rejoice.* The word undoubtedly signifies any mighty complacence, delight, and satisfaction in a thing. But here by the context it is confined to such a delight and satisfaction in a thing, as is accompanied with a trust and confidence in it as our greatest felicity, safety, and security. *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,* i. e. Let him not confide or depend on it, as that which will bear him out in the time of danger and distress; and so in the rest. *But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me.* Which words Grotius thus paraphraseth; "Let him trust on this,

"that he knoweth me, to wit, so as to express this "his knowledge of me in his life and actions[a]."

That I am the Lord, which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. Where Grotius again observes, that it is not said that he knoweth me according to my nature and essence; for so no man, in this life at least, can know God; but that he knoweth me *which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness;* i. e. according to those properties and attributes whereby I have made myself known to men in my word and works; such as lovingkindness and goodness, justice, and a perfect ὀρθότης, rectitude or righteousness, in all my dealings towards the sons of men. The same Grotius farther notes it as remarkable, that it is added *in the earth,* to meet with the vain and wicked conceit of those who held that God's providence extends not to sublunary things, to things on earth, but is employed solely and wholly in the disposal of heavenly things above us; all things here below being left to the determination either of blind chance, or fatal necessity, arising from an inseparable chain of causes linked together in the first creation of things. In opposition to which impious imagination, God himself by his prophet assures us, that we are to know him as a God that *exerciseth lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.* Which the divine Psalmist also more fully and distinctly expresseth, Psalm cxiii. 5, 6. *Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth!*

[a] In eo fidat quod me noverit, nimirum si et hoc factis ostendat.

The plain sense of the whole text in short is this: instead of glorying or trusting in our own wisdom, power, or wealth, as the men of the world use to do, we are to know, and assuredly to believe, that all the actions and concerns of men on earth are governed and disposed of by the providence of God; whom therefore we ought humbly to acknowledge, faithfully to serve and obey, and on him steadfastly to trust and depend in the whole course of our lives, this being our best and indeed only security. So that the prophet delivers the same thing here, which Solomon doth, Prov. iii. 5, 6, 7. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart——In all thy ways acknowledge him——Fear the Lord, and depart from evil.*

The whole scope of the text thus explained is comprised in these two observations.

I. It is a very sinful and vain thing for any man so to glory in his own wisdom, strength, or wealth, as to place his trust or confidence in either of them.

II. The religious acknowledgment of God's providence in the wise and righteous government and disposal of all human affairs, joined with an humble dependence and firm trust on him, in the way of obedience to him, is man's best, and indeed only security.

And first, It is a very vain and sinful thing for any man so to glory in his own wisdom, strength, or wealth, as to place his trust and confidence in either or all of them.

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, &c. i. e. Let not any man so glory in either of these, as to confide and trust in them without a due regard to

God's providence in the government of things; for these severally and jointly are very weak and vain props for a man to build and rely upon. I shall pursue the proposition in its several parts.

(1.) *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom.* This indeed is the most natural pride of man. It was the contempt of that simple innocence, wherein God created our first parents, and their affectation of I know not what knowledge and wisdom beside and beyond it, that was their ruin in Paradise. And the sons of fallen man are generally apt to think that they possess indeed that wisdom which their first parents vainly coveted and aspired to.

Wisdom is the idol that sinful man chiefly adores and worships; with the mere shadow of this he is pleased, upon this especially he values himself, and the very conceit of this puffs him up with pride and self-confidence. He can more contentedly be stripped of all his other vain glories, than want the reputation of this.

Hence (as one well observes) though there have been some found, not only contented with, but even glorying in, the name of irreligious, yea in being accounted atheists, and wholly void of all religion; yet scarce any have been known willing to bear the character of foolish and unwise; and the reproach of knave in the corrupt world is esteemed less ignominious than that of fool. And even of those who have some relish of virtue and goodness in them, how few are there, that either indeed do, or would be thought to do, any thing in favour thereof, which might in the least degree impeach the credit of their wisdom in the esteem of the foolish world! So fain would all be accounted, though very few in truth are, wise.

The main reason of which seems to be this, that whereas the want of wisdom imports impotence and inability; irreligion and immorality are by election and free choice.

Now the pride of man, if God's grace correct it not, makes him more impatient of any want that argues him to be naturally weak and impotent, than of a moral defect proceeding from his own free election and choice of will. And hence it is, that many boast of things craftily done by them for some particular advantage, which they know to be evil and unlawful: thus glorying in their wit, whilst they are not at all ashamed of their wickedness. In a word, every man would be wise, and be thought so too, and most men think themselves really to be so, and those few mortals that are wise indeed, in comparison to the rest, if they have not the fear of God joined with their wisdom, are infallibly proud of it, and glory in it, and trust to their own counsels, without due regard to the divine wisdom and providence, the only sure and safe guide amidst the infinite uncertainties and perplexities of human life.

Now how perfectly vain this glorying and trust of man in his own wisdom is, will appear (to omit many others) by these few following considerations.

1. Consider that the wisest of men many times most grossly mistake their measures, and, as if they were infatuated by some destiny, do the most foolish things. It is almost proverbial, that there is nothing so foolishly said, but some wise man hath said the same: and it is as certain, that there is no action so foolishly done, but that the examples of wise men may be alleged to patronise the folly of it. Solomon, the wisest, not only of kings, but of all mere mortals,

may yet be observed to have committed as gross incongruities, both in public government and private conversation, as any the most unadvised prince or man was ever guilty of.

2. Consider that wise men are apt, as to be confident of, so to be secure in their own wisdom, and to despise those that are beneath them in that faculty, as mere fools, and thereupon to grow careless, and to lay themselves open to those, who though they have less wit, yet have many times more vigilance; who watch, and often meet with an opportunity of getting their advantage of them.

3. Consider how many secret lurking contingencies and chances there are in the course of human affairs, which no sagacity or wisdom of man can foresee or provide against, one of which suddenly happening, may utterly defeat and frustrate the best laid design and contrivance of the wisest man. And when such a chance happens, the wisest man is forced to speak in the language of the fool, *non putaram*. Experience tells us this, and it were easy to give you many notable instances of it out of history, if the time would permit.

4. Consider that every man's life lies at God's mercy and absolute disposal, who can, and often doth, by a sudden death snap off the designing man, just as his design is growing to maturity, thereby dashing the whole frame of his plot and machination in pieces. This the divine Psalmist takes notice of in princes and great men, Psalm cxlvi. 3, 4. *Put not your trust in princes and great men, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.*

The designs and contrivances of great and wise men are altogether as uncertain as the breath they live by; that breath is on a sudden gone, and all their wisest counsels cease and perish with it. Man plots and designs, and says within himself, this and that, and the other great matter, he will do hereafter. But, behold! divine Providence cuts him short, by cutting off his life on a sudden, and all his designs together with it.

5. And lastly, Consider that God professedly sets himself to oppose the proud man that *glories in his own wisdom*, to baffle his wisdom, and to turn it into folly, to cross and frustrate his designs and contrivances, and to bring his counsels to nought. It is a sad sentence to these men, which St. James hath, chap. iv. 6. and St. Peter in his first Epistle, chap. v. 5. *God resisteth*, sets himself as it were in battle array, to fight with *the proud*[b]. Indeed the proud man is an invader of the divine glory, challenging that to himself which is God's; and against invasion, force useth to be opposed. Now who can stand against the divine force and power? what wisdom is able to countermine the divine wisdom? How easily, and how many thousand ways, can the almighty and the all-wise God confound the greatest politician!

These considerations are sufficient to shew the great sin, vanity, and folly of trusting to a man's own wisdom, without regard to the providence of God in the government of things, and the necessity of following the Wise Man's advice, Prov. iii. 5, 6, 7. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways*

[b] Ὁ Θεὸς ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται.

acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. I proceed to the second part of the first observation.

(2.) *Let not the mighty man glory in his might.* Whether by that we understand might and strength of body, or a mighty interest in the world, or both. First, for bodily might and strength, men are generally apt to presume on it. The athletic man, he that enjoys a firm and robust constitution of body, seldom or never thinks of sickness, much less of death, as in any nearness of approach to him. He is upon the matter sure of a long life, and in this confidence (which is the greatest mischief) puts off and delays his repentance, giving himself up to vain and sinful pleasures and delights, and thinking it time enough many years hence to be serious and religious. This is a perfect vanity; for our own daily experience furnishes us with examples of the strongest men suddenly assaulted with weakness and sickness, and sinking under the burden of it into their graves, into dust and rottenness.

The man whom we see brisk and lively to-day, so that we admire, and perhaps envy his health, within a few days hence we may hear sad news of, that he is either sick, or dying, or dead; and from being the object of admiration and envy, become on a sudden the object of our pity, grief, and sorrow. And it is a common observation, that many valetudinarians, many sickly persons, that scarce ever in their lives knew what health was, have yet outlived and trod upon the graves of those who have enjoyed it in the greatest perfection. These very frequently, either by a fever suddenly kindled in their blood or

spirits, or by a surfeit taken in confidence of their strength to bear strong drink, or to digest the greatest load of meat; or by a fall, or some surprising accident, posting to the gates of death; to which the other march by the slow and leisurely paces of a long and lingering infirmity. Indeed God himself delights to show his strength in man's weakness, and his strength against man's strength; to teach us that we should not despond in the former, nor depend and trust in the latter.

There are others that glory in their bodily strength, as their great and sure defence against their enemies; and indeed, in confidence of this, create enemies to themselves, braving and affronting all they meet with. But these persons generally at last meet with their match, yea are overmatched: some of them fall as victims or beasts sacrificed to Bacchus, by a quarrel commenced in a drunken assembly: others die in the field, when they are neither drunk nor sober, by the sword of a private enemy, or perhaps a friend whom they would needs make their enemy, and are left there, as pitiful spectacles of grinning honour; and most of them come to an unfortunate and untimely end.

But if by might we understand a great and mighty interest and power in the world; to trust in this is every whit as vain as our confidence in the former. For how often doth Almighty God *shew strength with his arm; scattering the proud in the imagination of their hearts, and putting down the mighty from their seats!* as it is excellently expressed in the magnificat, or song of the blessed Virgin, Luke i. 51, 52. How many examples doth history, yea our own age and observation, supply us

with, of great and mighty men meeting with as great falls, and falling into the greatest ruin! But I shall not insist on this, as being a subject not so fit for this congregation. Only I shall make bold to send all great and mighty men, that trust in their power and greatness, without a due dependence on divine Providence, to take advice, and learn from a woman, but yet a woman divinely inspired, and delivering the oracles of the great God; her name is Hannah, who, 1 Sam. ii. 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, almost in the words of my text, thus bespeaks all the great men of the world: *Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girt with strength.—The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.* And so I pass to the third and last branch of my first observation.

(3.) *Let not the rich man glory in his riches,* let him not trust in these. This indeed is the greatest prop that the carnal and worldly man is apt to rely on; this is the rock and fortress, the tower and castle, to which upon all occasions, and in the greatest exigencies, he hath recourse and flies to; and here, if any where, he promiseth himself safety.

The wise man thinks this the most necessary tool

and instrument to work his designs by, and despairs of doing any great matters without it. The mighty and powerful man believes his chiefest strength and interest to lie in his wealth; a rich exchequer being accounted the surest support of the greatest monarch. And, in a word, among all ranks and degrees of men this is held for a maxim:

Quantum quisque sua, &c.

"The greater riches, the greater reputation and "credit in the world."

Hence the wisest of men, Solomon, tells us, that *money answers all things*, Eccles. x. 19. i. e. it answers all the designs, desires, and necessities of men. This indeed is the saying of the wisest of men; but yet this saying is to be taken *cum grano salis*, "with a grain of wisdom;" the same, which the Wise Man gives us in the same book, Eccles. vii. 11, 12. *Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun. For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that it giveth life to them that have it.* Wisdom and wealth, a good soul and a good estate, are fitly matched together. For,

Haud facile emergunt, &c.

"The greatest virtues are oppressed by poverty."

Drusius on the text gives us a proverb of the Hebrews, "The law is good with the way of the "earth [c]." The law, that is, the study of the law, true piety, is good with the way of the earth, i. e. with some advantage that may afford a man a liberal and useful subsistence in this world. For the poor man cannot always, and in all circumstances, make use of his wisdom; or if he can use it, he wants authority:

[c] Bona est lex cum via terræ.

men generally regarding not what is spoken, but who speaks; and there being a great difference between the same saying or action, when spoken by a rich man in credit and reputation, and a poor despised person. But yet so excellent is true wisdom, that itself alone gives life to the owner of it; i. e. a comfortable life, a long life, (when Providence sees it good,) yea life eternal. But an inheritance without wisdom is a sorry possession, and really a very poverty. Wealth separated from piety is a most vain thing, and it is the greatest folly to trust in it.

But perhaps the text may be otherwise interpreted, by understanding the wisdom spoken of in the first place, of secular or worldly wisdom: and the knowledge last mentioned, of the only true knowledge and wisdom, which the same Wise Man often tells us consists in the fear of God and sincere piety and religion, and then the words are to be thus paraphrased: *Wisdom is good with an inheritance; for wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence,* &c. i. e. worldly wisdom and worldly wealth are seemingly a strong security and fence to the man that hath them both together. But indeed neither the one nor the other severally, nor both together united, are to be depended on; that wisdom and understanding, which consists in the fear of God, being man's chiefest, yea only security and felicity; that alone, which gives him life, i. e. makes his life safe and comfortable here, and brings him perfect peace and happiness hereafter. This is a plain comment on my text: *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me,* &c. However this

is certain, that wealth and riches are very vain things to be gloried and trusted in, as a man's chief security and felicity. For,

1. Riches reach only to the outward man, and cannot cure the inward evils and diseases of the mind. What doth all the wealth of the world signify to the man that is naturally and incurably melancholy, that dwells in a continual cloud, and looks on all the brighter things without him through a black glass and a thick mist of darkness? Besides, if some accidental discontent seize upon the rich man, (and the richest men are not out of the reach of such discontents,) how doth this sour all his enjoyments and delights, and render him inwardly most miserable, in the midst of all his outward happiness! How apt is every real or imaginary affront from his inferiors, that are either indeed so, or thought so by him, to disquiet and disturb him! How was Haman vexed in the midst of all his glory, for want only of a bow from Mordecai, Esth. iii. 5. Ahab, the richest of the kings of Israel, having taken a fancy to Naboth's vineyard, and being denied it, *was heavy and displeased*, and took his bed upon it, and could not sleep, and would not eat, 1 Kings xxi. 4. We are often infinitely mistaken, and take the falsest measures, when we envy the happiness of rich and great men; we know not the inward canker that eats out all their joy and delight, and makes them really much more miserable than ourselves.

But what if a troubled conscience assaults the rich man? And from this danger he is not free, nay to this he is, of all others, most subject. For riches are styled by our blessed Lord *the mammon of unrighteousness*, Luke xvi. 9. Because they are for the

most part found in the hands of unrighteous men, and by them are most valued, as being the mammon they serve and honour more than God; and also because they are often gotten by unrighteous means, and generally used to unrighteous purposes, being made the instruments of sin, and ministers to luxury and wantonness. Now, I say, what if all the wickedness he is guilty of, in the getting or using of his wealth, happen to stare in the face of the rich man's conscience when awakened by sickness or any other affliction? How doth this affright him, and into what horrors doth it cast him!

2. Riches cannot cure all the evils and diseases of the body neither. One sharp fit of the gout, stone, or strangury, will overcome all the cordial power of gold and silver, and make a man despise his riches, and willing to part with his beloved money for that ease which the vilest beggar enjoys. But this will not always do; money may procure the physician, but oftentimes the physician cannot cure the disease; and the rich man is left to roar under his torment, or miserably to languish under his infirmity, whilst the poor man sings and rejoices in his ease and health. Besides, I take it for certain, that if not the poor, yet the meaner man hath great advantages in point of health above the rich. For that temperance and plainer fare and exercise of body to which the condition of his life necessitates the man of a lower fortune, is in truth the best physic, and that which, after a tedious and costly course, the physician himself oftentimes adviseth his rich patient to.

3. Riches are no security against outward accidents and contingencies. God hath placed man in

this world, in the midst of many hazards and evil chances, which fall not under any certain rule, but that of divine foresight and providence. To these the rich man is as liable as the poorest beggar. A tile or stone may as soon fall on and crush the rich man's head as the vilest peasant's; the rich man stands on no better legs, and hath no other arms, than the poor man; and he may, and as often doth need the surgeon to cure his broken leg or arm. He that is clothed in purple is thereby no more secured from a sudden blast of lightning than a man in rags. In the time of war and public calamity, the rich man generally fares the worst of all, and is exposed to plunder, rapine, and violence; whilst the meaner man is overlooked, and his obscurity is his greatest security and safety.

4. Riches are themselves uncertain, and therefore not to be gloried and trusted in. For what a folly is it for a man to be secure and confident in that, of the possession of which he can never be secure! Hence the great apostle gives it as a proper advice to rich men, *not to trust in the uncertainty of riches*, or *in uncertain riches*[d]. And of riches the wisest of men thus elegantly discourseth, Prov. xxiii. 4, 5. *Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly as an eagle toward heaven.* Riches are as volatile a thing as the bird of the air, no where fixed, uncertain in the getting and keeping; flying from us both when we grasp after them and seek them, and when we think we have them in sure posses-

[d] Μηδὲ ἠλπικέναι ἐπὶ πλούτου ἀδηλότητι. [1 Tim. vi. 17.]

sion. Many are the projects of men to get riches, and some of them are so probable, so likely to take, and come so near the desired effect, that the man thinks himself as secure of them, as if he had them already in his power: but by some unexpected accident the project fails, and the man is left as poor as before; yea much poorer and more miserable, as being fallen from a great expectation, and afflicted with the loss of that, which though he never had, yet he was in his own conceit as sure of as if he had possessed it.

And when a man hath gotten wealth, how uncertain is the keeping of it! how often doth the bird fly away on a sudden! Riches are uncertain, as being subject to many chances, to theft and fraud, and rapine and violence, and fire and water too; a few great wrecks at sea often undoing the richest merchant. Besides men generally seek after wealth, not so much for their own comfortable subsistence whilst they live, (for a little will suffice for that,) as for the raising of a family, and leaving a rich and flourishing posterity behind them when they are dead. But, alas! how vain is this design! Hear the royal Psalmist, Psalm xxxix. 6. *Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.* The provident man hath commonly a wasting prodigal, and the wise man a fool for his heir. And very often the heir utterly fails, and the family is extinct, and the name of it is perished from the earth, and the wealth gone to strangers that are no way related to the first gatherer of it.

But if the family be still in being, yet oftentimes the riches are fled, and the estate is gone. How

many great estates may we reckon up, that have within the compass of one age shifted several families! A good many years ago such a lordship was in such a family, (and perhaps their escutcheon is still to be seen in the wall or windows of the mansion-house, as a sad monument of decayed and ruined gentility;) afterwards it went to another, and now it is in a third or fourth family; and whither it will go next, who can tell? so vain a thing is it for a man to promise himself that he shall convey his inheritance to his heirs for ever. It is an excellent admonition to this purpose, that David gives to those that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, Psalm xlix. 10, 11, 12. *For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish.* The sense of which place seems to be this:

The rich man that trusteth in his riches, seeth, or may see, that the wise man and the fool certainly die, the one as well as the other; and that the wisest man, by all his wisdom, cannot so secure the estate he hath gotten, to his own progeny, but that it may, and often doth, in a short time, pass to another family. And yet such is the folly of the worldling, that he promises himself a perpetual name in the world, and a never-failing, and always flourishing posterity. But indeed, as the richest and most honourable man must himself certainly die, and have

his own honour laid in the dust; so the honour of his house, family, and posterity generally lasts not long, but is also in a little tract of time buried in oblivion.

5. And lastly, riches will certainly fail, leave, and forsake the owners of them at last, when they come to die.

If riches could for the present cure all the evils of our minds and bodies; if they could secure us against all outward accidents in this world, if we were sure of them for our lives, nay, and that they should continue to our posterity; yet were it a vain thing to trust in them as our security and happiness. For we ourselves must certainly, after a few years, bid an eternal farewell to them, and we must die and for ever leave them. This is the meditation of David in the abovementioned Psalm xlix. 16, 17. *Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.* Now what a contemptible, or rather pitiful object is the rich man when he comes to die, if then he hath nothing else but his riches to trust in! Such an one dies with far greater regret and torment of mind, and is so much more miserable in his death than the poorest man. He is now for ever to leave all his wealth, together with all that pomp and grandeur, all those delights and pleasures that it afforded, and his body to be laid in the dark and silent grave; and as for his soul, (as little religion as he formerly had, yet,) he is now uncertain at least what will become of it; but he is certain, that if there be any place of misery for wicked souls, thither his must go. But on the other side,

the poor man hath no such temptation to make him fond of living or unwilling to die, but may rather look on death as a writ of ease, given him by Providence from a life of sorrow and labour.

But see the stupidity and infatuation of fallen man! The rich man knows he must certainly die as well as others, and that the time of his death is altogether so uncertain, that, for ought he can tell, the next day or hour may be his last. He knows that whenever he dies he must infallibly leave his wealth behind him, and carry none of his riches along with him. And to us, that live under the revelation of the Gospel, God hath given so full a demonstration of a life to come, wherein they shall be for ever happy that despise this world, and they miserable that dote upon it, that it seems almost impossible for any rational man, that duly and impartially weighs the evidence given him, to doubt of it; and yet the rich man still depends on and glories in his riches. Whereas if he did but reflect on the perfect vanity of his actions in so doing, and seriously consider with himself how foolish and imprudent he therein is, he would heartily subscribe to the truth of the second observation I proposed to discourse of, viz. That the religious acknowledgment of God's providence, in the wise and righteous government and disposal of all human affairs, joined with an humble dependence and firm trust on him, is man's best and indeed only security. But I shall reserve this subject to another opportunity.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be given and ascribed all honour and glory, all religious worship and adoration, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON XIX.

THAT THE RELIGIOUS ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE, IN THE WISE AND RIGHTEOUS GOVERNMENT AND DISPOSAL OF ALL HUMAN AFFAIRS, JOINED WITH AN HUMBLE DEPENDENCE AND FIRM TRUST ON HIM, IN THE WAY OF OBEDIENCE TO HIM, IS MAN'S BEST AND INDEED ONLY SECURITY.

JER. ix. 23, 24.

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

IN my former discourse on this text I have stripped the carnal man of all his vain confidences, whether in his own wisdom, or in his might, or in his wealth, and have abundantly made good the first proposition contained in the text, viz. That it is a very sinful and vain thing for any man so to glory in his wisdom, might, or wealth, as to place his trust and confidence in either or all of them. But lest we should seem to discourse only in a destructive way, in taking off poor mortals from their false trusts, and then leave them in despair, and destitute of any other more sure and certain dependence; I proceed now to the second observation, which was this:

The religious acknowledgment of God's providence

in the wise and righteous government and disposal of all human affairs, joined with an humble dependence and firm trust on him, in the way of obedience to him, is man's best, yea only security.

But let him that glorieth, &c. For the full clearing of which observation, I shall endeavour plainly to demonstrate these three things.

I. That there is a divine providence that takes notice of, and wisely and righteously directs and governs all human affairs, i. e. the actions and concerns of all men on earth.

II. That there is a most especial providence over good men, that orders all things for their good.

III. That therefore we ought, leaving all other earthly dependencies, to commit ourselves to the divine providence, in the way of piety, and sincere obedience to the divine commands, and firmly to rely and trust on it, as our best, yea only security. Of these in their order.

I. That there is a wise and righteous providence of God that takes cognizance of and governs the concerns of men on earth, is most plain, not only from the holy Scriptures, but also from the universal consent even of those civilized heathen nations which know not, or own not, the sacred oracles as such.

1. First, The holy Scriptures (the doctrine whereof will appear to him that diligently and impartially inquires into all the intrinsic and extrinsic arguments whereby it is confirmed, to be most certainly of God) in very many places clearly set forth the providence of God over the affairs of men. Hear some few, out of a great abundance that might be produced, most plain and express determinations of sacred writ concerning this matter. Such is that, Job xxxiv. 21.

For his eyes (i. e. God's eyes) *are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.* And that, Psalm xi. 4, 5. *The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, and his eyelids try, the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence the Lord hateth.* And Psalm xxxiii. 13, 14, 15. *The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike,* (or as the Septuagint and the Latin render the Hebrew, *severally,*) *he considereth all their works.* And Prov. v. 21. *The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.* And lastly, Jer. xxxii. 17, 18, 19. *Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee. Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is his name, great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

This is the doctrine of the divinely inspired writers; concerning whom it is farther observable, that they have in their very writings not only taught us the doctrine of providence, but also given us a full and demonstrative proof thereof in those many clear and exact predictions of future contingencies, which by the divine Spirit they have delivered to the world many ages before the things themselves came to pass.

Now prophecy is an irrefragable argument of providence; for if God foresees the actions of men before they are done, he cannot but see them in the doing; and those good or evil things, which beforehand he tells shall befall men, we may be sure when they happen are the effects of his providence.

2. To the doctrine of the holy Scriptures, concerning the providence of God, all the civilized heathen nations have given their suffrage, not only in word, but (which is more) in fact and practice. For though some conceited and contentious philosophers have ventured to dispute against Providence, yet they could never by all their sophistry so far prevail against the reason of mankind, and the force of primitive tradition, as to eradicate the settled belief of it. But the generality of men in every age and nation, not wholly degenerated into brutishness, have still practised upon a supposition of a divine Providence overseeing and governing the concerns of men. Of which I shall give you two or three most plain and demonstrative instances.

First, The natural worship of God, consisting in prayer and supplication to him, is and always hath been the practice of all nations not perfectly barbarous. For the truth of which affirmation, I appeal to the faith of all heathen historians and writers that are at this day extant. Now what is prayer to God, to deliver us from danger, or to give us any blessing or good thing, but a direct acknowledgment of his providence over us? For to what purpose is it for any man to pray unto him, that either cannot or will not hear his prayers, or take any notice of his petitions, or grant what he desires? The divine Psalmist seems to me plainly enough to reflect on this;

Psalm lxv. 2. *O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come:* where *all flesh* is an expression so wide and comprehensive, as that it must at least signify the generality of mankind. Nor is it any wonder that God should be set forth by the Psalmist, even to the heathens, as a God that heareth prayer. For we all well know, that there is a providence of God over the heathens, which administers at least temporal good things to them without their prayers, and therefore may much more do so upon their prayers and supplications, though misguided, and not well directed. We know that the mariners in the ship with Jonah, (though otherwise as seamen and heathens too they might have been thought not very inclinable to religion, yet,) when they apprehended the danger of shipwreck, had recourse every man to his God by prayer, Jonah i. 5. and we know that the supreme and only true God heard their prayers, as proceeding from some honest principles of natural religion in them.

Secondly, The instituted worship of God, (for so I shall presume to call it,) consisting in sacrifices, hath been as universal a practice in all ages and nations as the former, and was indeed always joined with it. It were not very difficult (if it were our present business) to shew how from this practice, as taught our first parents after their fall, and from them derived to all mankind descending from them, some of the main doctrines of the Gospel itself may be deduced. But however this is certain, that the doctrine of providence is so legible in the custom of sacrificing, that he who runs may read it. For sacrifices unto God among the heathens, and among all nations that used them, were either for the averting of evils

that might come from him, or removing of evils already inflicted by him, as punishments of sin; or to procure those good things from him which they wanted, or to return thanks to him for good things already received; and so were all of them plain acknowledgments of divine Providence.

Thirdly and lastly, The custom of deciding doubtful matters by oaths hath been and is likewise received and practised among all nations that had or have any sense of God left in them. This as well as the former is so notorious, that I need not spend my time in the proof of it. Now what are oaths but downright appeals to the providence of God, whereby we acknowledge his omniscience, and that he knows the truth of all things; and his power and justice, that he can and will punish the authors of falsehood, and protect the lovers of truth? So firm a possession hath the belief of Providence always kept in the world.

Let us consider now those objections which some bold and self-opiniated men have brought against it. To omit here the trite and common objection of the present prosperity of some wicked men, and the adversity of some good men, (a full solution whereof you have in the seventy-third Psalm throughout,) the chief cavils of the epicureans are these two:

Object. 1. That it is inconceivable how God can at the same moment of time see and take notice of all the actions of all men on earth, especially their inward actions, the thoughts and secrets of their hearts.

Object. 2. That it seems beneath the majesty of God to regard or concern himself about so low and vile a thing as man is.

Before I distinctly answer these pretences, I shall in general observe this, that they are directly opposite each to the other. For the former objection supposes God too little to see and govern all the actions and concerns of men; the other makes him so great and so high, that he disdains to concern himself about them. In the former, the infidel pleads against divine Providence, that *non potest*, "it can-"not" take notice of all things on earth: in the latter, he objects, *non vacat exiguis*, &c. "That God will "not concern himself about the little affairs of men, "as being unworthy of his cares and regard."

In a word, the first objection sets the work of providence in the government of this world above God: the second placeth it beneath him. Thus error always contradicts, not only the truth, but itself. But let us now encounter these objections severally.

As for the first, that it is inconceivable how all the actions, yea the most inward thoughts of all men can in the same moment of time be seen and taken notice of by God; it is an objection so foolish, that any rational man may well be ashamed of it. It was as wisely as wittily said of one, "That if the "brutes were capable of a design to draw the pic-"ture of God, they would paint him just like one of "themselves." So these brutish men cannot, or rather will not think of God, the infinite Almighty God, under any other notion than what is adequate to their own, not only finite, but feeble and weak measures. Thou canst not conceive how God doth see and govern all things in this world; doth it therefore follow he cannot or doth not so do? a ridiculous consequence. The beasts do not, cannot conceive how we men make ships, and tame the un-

ruly ocean; how and by what maxims of policy we frame and govern kingdoms and commonwealths; how we measure the courses of the stars, and take observations of the heavenly bodies; much less how we discourse of religion and divine matters; and yet we are sure we can do, and actually do all these things. Now it is certain, that we mortal men are infinitely far inferior to the supreme God than the beasts are to us. But let us see whether these great pretenders to reason may not be convinced of their folly even by sense itself.

Thou that questionest the possibility of God's inspection of all things here below, look up and behold that glorious luminary of heaven the sun; see how in the same moment it diffuseth its light and heat into all the several parts and corners of the wide earth exposed to it, and peeps through every crevice of every the most secret place thereof. Now how canst thou see this wonderfully diffusive influence of a created light, and not grant a far more extensive efficacy to the great Creator, the Father of lights? But to come nearer to thee, consider the very powers and faculties that God hath given thee, and then thou canst never doubt of the divine power and providence over thee. Do but open thine eyes, and thou canst in a moment see to the starry heaven, though at a very vast distance from thee: now he that made thee see from earth to heaven, cannot he himself much more see from the highest heaven to this earth? And if thou questionest how God can know thine heart and secret thoughts, I ask thee how thou thyself comest to know them? Didst thou not receive the very faculty of knowing that, and all other things that are knowable by thee, from God?

And could he make thee to know that, which he himself cannot know? This is the very reasoning of the divine Psalmist, Psalm xciv. where, verse 7, he brings in wicked and profane men thus slighting divine Providence; *Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it:* and then he excellently refutes them, verse 8—11. *Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.* The foundation of which excellent argumentation is this; whatever perfection there is in created things, it is from God the Creator, and therefore in him it must needs be in an eminent manner. Much after the same way the apostle St. John discourses, 1 John iii. 20. *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* If a man be conscious to himself of his own wickedness, yea the very secret wickedness and hypocrisy of his heart; sure God himself, who set up this *candle* of conscience (as Solomon calls it, Prov. xx. 27.) in every man, cannot be ignorant of it; he being the fountain of knowledge, and all knowledge in the creature derivative from him, and so knowing all things that are knowable by any creature, and infinitely more. But I have perhaps spent too much time in answering a foolish objection.

I therefore proceed to refute the other cavil against divine providence, that pretends it to be beneath the majesty of God to take notice of the mean and vile

concerns of men on earth. The former objection assaulted the omniscience of God, this strikes at his goodness; and therefore though it be more specious, is yet really every whit as impious as the other. Now here it is to be confessed, that we men on earth, yea the most glorious creatures of heaven, the angels, are infinitely beneath the majesty of God, the Creator of all things. But yet we say also, that whatsoever the infinite majesty of God was pleased at first to create and make, and in any degree to communicate his goodness unto, cannot be thought unworthy of his after care and providence; yea by and from its first creation, it is in a manner entitled to the future providence of God that created it. It was the goodness of God, being self-sufficient and from eternal ages perfectly happy in himself, that moved him in that point of duration which his infinite wisdom saw most fitting, as it were to go forth and down from himself, and to give being to very many things, and to communicate his goodness to each of them in such degrees as the same his infinite wisdom was pleased to assign, and from the same goodness, whereby he created things, he still preserves them, provides for them, and takes care of them.

The work of creation and providence are both equally a συγκατάβασις, (as some of the ancient fathers term it,) a *condescension* in God, and of this gracious condescension the sacred writers take special notice. So the divine Psalmist, Psalm cxiii. 4, 5, 6. *The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and*

earth! As if he had said, The majesty of God is not only above all the nations of the earth, but his glory is also above the heavens and all the excellent powers and inhabitants thereof; and yet such is his unparalleled goodness and condescension, that he humbleth himself to behold and take notice of the transactions both in heaven and earth. This is the plain sense of that text; and the hyperbaton, which our learned English paraphrast suggests, is manifestly forced and violent, as he himself at last doth little less than confess. So that if we look to the infinite majesty of God, without respect to his goodness, the heavenly affairs are as well beneath his care and providence as the concerns of men on earth. But yet such is the goodness of God, that he certainly takes care of both.

And as to the condescension of God in his special care of man, the same divinely inspired writer excellently discourses of it, Psalm viii. 3, 4. *When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?* i. e. When I view the heavens, and contemplate that stupendous work of thine, and therein behold thy supereminent glory and majesty, I cannot but be amazed to think that thou, so great a God, shouldest take such care of so mean and vile a thing as man is. The Psalmist questions not God's special regard to the sons of men, but wonders at his goodness and gracious condescension therein. Question it, I say, he doth not; for he presently observes a plain demonstration of it in the very constitution and frame of nature; whereby it is so ordered, that man hath an universal do-

minion given him over this whole lower world, verse 5—8. *For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts* (i. e. the wild beasts) *of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.* Thus I have despatched my first particular, viz. That there is a wise and righteous providence of God that takes cognizance of and governs the concerns of men on earth.

II. I proceed hence to the second head of discourse which I have proposed to myself, viz. That there is a most especial providence of God over good men, that orders all things for their good.

The providence of God is indeed over all things on earth, but not over all things alike. God takes care of the very brute creatures; the Psalmist telling us, that *he giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry*, being as soon as they are hatched left destitute and forsaken by the old ones, Psalm cxlvii. 9. But God's regard to man is such, that in comparison thereof the holy text seems to deny that he hath any regard to beasts. *Doth God take care for oxen?* saith the apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 9. Yes, he doth; but he hath a far greater regard to men; and therefore that law, *Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn*, teacheth us not only that we should do right to our labouring beasts; but also and much more that we should not defraud such men as by their labours, especially in the work of the Gospel, deserve well at

our hands of their due reward, which is the reasoning of the apostle in that place. Hence it is that the very lives of the brutes are permitted by Providence, yea given by the divine law to the use and service of man; and he is allowed to take and kill, not only the beasts of the earth, but the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea, to furnish out a plentiful table for himself.

Among men there is a most especial providence of God over those that are his children, that imitate his goodness, and walk in the paths of virtue and righteousness. The divine apostle tells us, *That the living God is* Σωτὴρ, *the Saviour* or Preserver *of all men, but especially of those that believe,* 1 Tim. iv. 10.

Wonderful are the expressions in Scripture of God's tender care and kindness towards good men. Our Saviour tells us, that the very *hairs of their head are numbered,* Matt. x. 30. where the speech is proverbial. We use to number and take account of things we value; and, on the other side, those things we esteem and regard not, we are said to make no account or reckoning of them. An hair signifies the very least thing, and the loss of an hair the least damage. So that the sense is, the very least concerns of good men are regarded by God, nor will he suffer them to sustain the least detriment in the way of piety and righteousness, which shall not tend to their greater good. God is said to be as tender of his people, as a man is *of the apple* or pupil *of his eye,* of which we know every man is very careful, that it receive not the least hurt, Deut. xxxii. 10. And David prays to God for his especial providence over himself in the very same phrase, Psalm xvii. 7, 8. *Shew thy marvellous lovingkind-*

ness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them: keep me as the apple of the eye, &c.; i. e. (saith the English paraphrast,) "Let thy "watchful and tender providence fence and secure "me from all dangers, after the same manner as "nature hath provided eyebrows and lids, and five "tunicles for guards to fence and preserve the black "(the most tender part) in the middle of the eye, "that wherein the visive faculty is placed."

And indeed abundant is the provision that God hath made for the defence and security of his faithful ones. The holy angels themselves are commanded to leave the heavenly blissful habitations, and to hover over this earth for their protection and preservation. For they are styled by the divine author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. i. 14. *ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation:* and the Psalmist tells us, *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them,* Psalm xxxiv. 7. Upon which it presently follows, verse 8, *O taste and see that the Lord is good! blessed is the man that trusteth in him.* Yea our Lord himself assures us, that his *little ones,* those that imitate the innocence and humility of little children, *have their angels in heaven,* Matt. xviii. 10. Hence the holy angels are termed *the eyes of the Lord,* as being the instruments of his watchful providence over good men. So 2 Chron. xvi. 9. *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself* (it should be *themselves*) *strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.* Where that by *the eyes of*

the Lord are meant angels of God, is plain enough from the words themselves, which clearly express the very employment of the holy angels in being sent, and running to and fro through the earth, for the protection and security of good and upright men, and which indeed can hardly be made sense without admitting that interpretation.

And the same is farther evident from other parallel texts of Scripture; in the fourth chapter of the prophecy of Zechariah, verse 2, we have a vision of seven lamps in a golden candlestick; the interpretation of which vision is thus given, verse 10. *Those seven, they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro throughout the whole earth.* Now what those *seven eyes of the Lord* are, we learn from St. John, Rev. v. 6. where we have a vision of the Lamb, *having seven horns and seven eyes*, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And those spirits he terms *angels*, chap. viii. 2. *I saw the seven angels which stood before God.* So again, Rev. i. 4. we read of *seven spirits* which are before God's throne, i. e. wait in his presence; do not sit upon, but stand before his throne, ready to receive his commands; and are therefore undoubtedly created spirits. For the understanding of which places we are to know, that the ancient Jews believed that among the holy angels, those eyes of God and instruments of his watchful providence over us, there are seven principal ones, as it were chief captains and commanders of the heavenly host. So in the ancient though apocryphal book of Tobit, chap. xii. 15. the angel Raphael is brought in thus speaking to Tobit and his son, *I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels——which go in and*

out before the glory of the holy One. And that this was no vain speculation of the Jews appears from those texts of canonical Scripture, both of the Old and New Testament, which we have but now alleged. But this by the way. I proceed.

By this ministry of his holy angels, God preserves the faithful, his children, from infinite unseen dangers, especially from their ghostly enemies, and directs them in all their ways, and blesses and gives good success (oftentimes strangely and unexpectedly) to their honest undertaking. And of this I have given several instances, in my discourse of the office of the holy angels, in reference to good men [a], &c. which I shall not now repeat.

Now what a wonderful condescension of the divine goodness is this, that the glorious courtiers of heaven, the intimate servants of the supreme King and Lord of the world, should thus attend upon us vile clods of earth! And how safe and happy must the good man needs be under the conduct of these wise, good, and powerful guardians! How easily can they, how readily will they, upon the command of our heavenly Father, preserve us from dangers, supply our wants, direct our courses, and give a prosperous issue to all our affairs. In a word, whether we look on the providence of God over the faithful in the fountain or in the streams, in the first mover or in the inferior wheels, in the principal cause or in the instruments; it appears every way an abundant provision for and security to them.

For a concluding proof whereof I shall only add that illustrious text, Psalm lxxxiv. 11. *The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace*

[a] P. 289. of this volume.

and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Divine Providence is not only a shield over the truly virtuous, to secure them from dangers, but a sun also continually shining on their heads, and sending forth upon them the comfortable beams and influences of his grace and favour. He not only removes evils from them, but supplies them with all good things that are indeed good for them. If they are fit for a wealthy prosperous condition, they shall have it, and that with God's blessing. But if a meaner condition be more convenient for them, they shall be made happy therein. If at any time afflictions be needful, (as they are often as necessary for our souls as physic is for our bodies,) they shall taste of the goodness of their heavenly Father even in them; they shall be supported under them, and made better by them, and in God's due time delivered from them. If God tries them, he will assist them in the trial, and crown them after it. And, in a word, divine Providence will so order all the occurrences of the good man's life in this world, as shall best conduce to his eternal happiness in the other; which is indeed the only main chance and great concern that we ought always and above all things to mind and think of.

III. And this brings me to the third and last stage of my discourse, That therefore we ought, leaving all other earthly dependencies, to commit ourselves to the divine Providence, in the way of piety and sincere obedience to the divine commands, and firmly to rely and trust on it as our best, yea only security. Which being so plain a consequence from what hath been already delivered, I shall be brief in the handling of it, and so conclude.

Trust and dependence on the divine Providence is every where in Scripture recommended as our great duty and only security; so that we can scarce open our Bibles but we meet with something that minds us of it. But of so great an abundance which might be produced, I shall select only two or three texts, that most plainly serve for this purpose. Hear the Psalmist, Psalm lv. 22. *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.* Hear him again, Psalm xxxvii. 3, 4, 5. *Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.* Where, upon our trust in God, it is promised that God will give us even the desire of our hearts, i. e. if not the particular, yet the general desire of our hearts. For we all desire in general that which is good, though we too often err in the particular choice, taking that for good which is indeed hurtful for us. Now if God deny that particular thing which we think to be good for us, but is not, and gives us that which he himself knows to be indeed good for us, he deals with us as becomes a wise and gracious Father, and thus he always deals with them that trust and depend on him. It is a shame for us Christians to be ignorant of this, when the heathen poet could say,

Si consilium vis,
Permittes ipsis expendere numinibus, quid
Conveniat nobis, rebusque sit utile nostris.
Nam pro jucundis, aptissima quæque dabunt dii.
Charior est illis homo quam sibi.

i. e. "Our best way is to leave it to the gods (so he "speaks in compliance with the custom of his coun- "trymen) to judge and determine what is useful and "convenient for us. For they will certainly give us, "instead of those things that most please us, those "things that are fittest for us. For they have a "greater care of man than he hath of himself."

But as to our duty of trusting in God, full is the expression of Solomon in the text we have more than once mentioned, Prov. iii. 5. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart.* Every man almost pretends to trust in God; but few trust on him in truth, and with the whole heart. Whereof this is a plain demonstration: no man heartily trusts in God, but he that doth every day commit himself and all his concerns in general to the divine Providence by serious prayer, and in every particular occurrence and business of moment makes his particular address to God, by humble supplication, for his direction and blessing. Now how very few are there, of those that pretend to trust in God, that do thus.

And after all, we are still to remember the proviso already given, that our dependence on God's providence must be accompanied with a sincere obedience to his commands. Hence the Psalmist joins both together in the above alleged text, Psalm xxxvii. 3. *Trust in the Lord, and do good.* And Solomon in the text last mentioned, Prov. iii. after he had said, ver. 5. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,* presently subjoins, ver. 7. *Fear the Lord, and depart from evil.* Our hope in God is presumption, without due regard to his laws, and an uniform obedience to his commands. And to convince us of the perfect vanity of such presumption, let us but attentively

consider, what that providence of God is that we pretend to trust in. That special providence of God, which is man's only security, (as we have above described it,) is nothing less than his special love and kindness to man, whereby he hath a tender regard to all his concerns, and, as a signal expression thereof, sends his holy angels, those most glorious spirits, to pitch their tents round about him, and to take a singular care and tuition of him in all his ways.

Now what an intolerable impudence is it in any wicked man to depend on such a providence of God over him? With what face canst thou expect God's special care and regard of thy concerns, that hast so little or no regard of his commands? Can the adulterer, the drunkard, the liar, the slanderer, the backbiter, the common swearer, the cheat, the unjust man, the covetous and worldly man, the spiteful and malicious man, or any man that continues in any wilful transgression of any known law of God, be a darling of divine Providence? Will the angels, the holy angels of God, those faithful ministers of his, attend on and do good offices for such as refuse to serve their great Lord and Master, yea live in downright rebellion against his government? Can the glorious host of heaven wait on the vassals of hell? This cannot be.

Indeed who can be worthy of that providence of God which we have set forth? No man by a worthiness of merit. But yet there is a worthiness of meetness, fitness, and due disposition required in all that expect to be favourites of the Almighty, and objects of his more especial care and providence. And this worthiness consists in a firm belief of the special providence of God over good men, in a sincere

and hearty endeavour to obey God in all things, i. e. to become ourselves good men, that we may be entitled to such his providence over us, and then in an entire trust and dependence on it.

Wherefore (to conclude) let us all in good earnest make it our great business to serve God, to study to know his will, and to do it when we know it, and then we are safe. Whosoever thou art that hearest me this day, be persuaded presently to forsake thy sinful courses, and entirely to resign up thyself to the divine government, and then be secure of the divine protection and special providence over thee. Then let loose the reins of thy hope and confidence in God, and trust in his gracious providence as much as thou canst, and thou shalt never be confounded. God shall lead thee by a most gracious economy through this vale of tears the whole course of thy pilgrimage in this world; directing thee in all difficulties, comforting thee in all sorrows and distresses, blessing all earthly enjoyments that he gives thee, and supplying the want of those that he thinks fit to deny thee with greater blessings; and in the life to come he shall pour out the full riches of his grace and goodness on thee.

For which blessed life God of his infinite mercy fit us, and thereinto in his due time admit us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON XX.

THAT IT IS MATTER OF GREAT USE AND CONCERNMENT, MUCH CONDUCING TO THE PURPOSES OF RELIGION, SERIOUSLY TO CONSIDER THE SHORTNESS AND UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE; AND THAT SUCH DUE CONSIDERATION OF OUR SHORT AND UNCERTAIN ABODE IN THIS WORLD IS THE GIFT OF GOD, AND THE EFFECT OF HIS GRACE, WHICH THEREFORE OUGHT TO BE SOUGHT FOR BY HUMBLE AND EARNEST PRAYER.

PSALM XXXIX. 4.

Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.

THIS thirty-ninth Psalm, composed on the same occasion as the thirty-seventh, namely, on the scandal that David took at the prosperity of wicked men whilst he was himself in misery, hath also a mixture of contemplation upon the vanity of all worldly things. The particular calamity that prompted David to this useful contemplation is not by interpreters fully agreed on.

Many think that it was some sickness that David was at this time afflicted with. Others are of the opinion, that his trouble from Absalom was the particular occasion of the Psalm.

But for myself, I incline to the first opinion, which I am confirmed in by the eleventh verse, where David describes the beauty of man as consuming away like a moth at God's rebuke and cor-

rection; and by the 13th and last verse, where he prays *that God would spare him, that he might recover strength, before he should go hence, and be no more.*

On which words a learned interpreter thus paraphrases[a], "Withhold thy scourge from me a little "while, that I may recover my former strength, or "health, before I am forced to depart out of this "world never more to return hither again."

This Psalm is, by the wisdom of our church, appointed to be used in the Office for the Burial of the Dead, as being almost wholly spent on the theme of the shortness and vanity of this our mortal life on earth; and is indeed a rich repository or commonplace of fit texts for funeral sermons.

As for the words which I have now chosen for the subject of my present discourse, they are evidently a devout prayer of David, relating to his death and departure out of this world. But it is questioned what the thing distinctly is for which David prays in these words, *Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days.*

Some have thought that he prays for a special revelation from God of the time of his death, taken either precisely or with some latitude, how long he should live, when he should die, and be called out of this world. Indeed this is a favour which it hath pleased God to grant unto some men. Thus Moses and Aaron, some time before their death, had notice given them of it, and of the place where they should lay themselves down and die, the one on mount Hor,

[a] Abstine paululum a flagellando me, ut vires pristinas recipiam, priusquam migrare cogar, nunquam huc reversurus.

the other on mount Nebo, Deut. xxxii. 49, 50. Thus Hezekiah had warning given him by the prophet Isaiah, to make his last will and testament, and to set his house in order, and prepare for his approaching death, Isai. xxxviii. 1. And when God was pleased, upon his earnest prayer and humble supplication, to reprieve him from that death, under which, according to the course of nature, he must necessarily have fallen, and extraordinarily to add some more years unto his life, he had this second favour from God, to know by the same prophet the precise number of years so added, viz. fifteen years, no more nor no less, verse 5. Thus Elijah had a revelation from God beforehand of his translation from this earth to heaven, as we read 2 Kings ii. And in the New Testament we find St. Peter was informed by our Lord Jesus of his approaching death and martyrdom, 2 Peter i. 13, 14. *I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.*

In ecclesiastical history, in the acts of Polycarp, recited by Eusebius in the fourth book of his History, chap. xv. we read that the blessed bishop and martyr, some days before his death, dreamt, that the pillow on which he lay was first all in a flame about him, and then burnt to ashes; and thereupon awaking, he told the brethren that he was sure he should very shortly be burnt at the stake for the confession of the Christian faith; which accordingly came to pass. Nor do we want some certain instances in our own age, of persons so instructed by their guardian angel, or by some other means, as that they have

been able, when in perfect health, punctually to foretell the day of their death.

But these are extraordinary cases. The prescience or foreknowledge of the day or time of our death is a thing for the most part unfit for us to ask of God, or for him to grant unto us; and therefore ordinarily the all-wise and good God reserves it as a secret unto himself. If men generally knew the day of their death, the ὠκύμοροι, they of shorter lives would spend their few days in grief and sorrow, and be continually vexed to see their lives circumscribed within so narrow limits, and be sluggish to all noble and generous actions that require time and labour. On the other side, they that knew they had many years yet to live, would be apt to procrastinate their repentance, and from that delay to take occasion of licentiousness. Our last day is therefore in mercy ordinarily hid from us, to the end that we should every day and continually prepare for it. Nor would men be careful to use the due means for the preservation of their health and life, if they knew *terminum vitæ fatalem*, "the fatal period of it."

This therefore I am persuaded is not the thing that David here prays for. What then, you will say, doth he pray for? I answer, he prays that God would make him to know in general how short and uncertain man's life here on earth is, that every man must certainly die, after a determinate and short number of years expired, being in the mean while uncertain and ignorant of that fatal period.

But, you will say again, doth not every man know as much as this? Yes; but very few consider it. When therefore David prays, that God would *make* him *to know his end, and the measure of* his *days*,

we are to call to mind the known rule of divines: "In Scripture, words of knowledge betoken suitable "affections [b]." For a man therefore to *know* his *end, and the measure of* his *days, what it is*, or to know how short and uncertain his life is on earth, is for him seriously to consider and lay to heart that great truth, and to live accordingly. This is not what every man doth, though every man ought to do it. In short, therefore, David here in my text prays for the very same thing that Moses doth in his prayer, Psalm xc. 12. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*, i. e. By thy grace enable us to make a just account of the shortness and uncertainty of our life on earth, that so we may wisely apply ourselves to make the best use we can of it, in repenting of our sins, and fitting ourselves for the final absolution. David's *measuring* of his days is doubtless the same with Moses's *numbering* his days.

The text being thus I hope sufficiently explained, I proceed to raise my observations from it, which shall be these two.

I. I observe, it is a matter of great use and concernment, much conducing to the purposes of religion, for a man to know his end, and the measure of his days, i. e. seriously to consider the shortness and uncertainty of his life here on earth. For you see David in my text makes this the matter of his serious prayer and humble supplication to Almighty God.

II. I observe, a due consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of man's life in this world is the gift of God, and the effect of his grace, which therefore

[b] In Scripturis, verba scientiæ connotant affectus.

we ought by prayer humbly and earnestly to ask of him. So David doth in my text, *Lord, make me to know mine end*, &c.

I. I begin with the first observation, viz. this, It is a matter of great use and concernment, much conducing to the purposes of religion, for a man to know his end, and the measure of his days, i. e. seriously to consider the shortness and uncertainty of his life here on earth.

This will appear by shewing you more particularly what it is for a man to know his end, and the measure of his days, or to number his days aright. The very explanation of the nature of this duty will of itself shew the great use and benefit of it.

For a man then to know the measure of his days, or to number his days aright, is,

1. To understand and consider the shortness and uncertainty of our life in this world, taken absolutely and in itself. The royal prophet excellently expresses this in the verse immediately following my text, *Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth.* An elegant metaphor, to set forth the brevity of man's life on earth. It is a very narrow scantling, as it were but an handful of time and duration. Many of the sons of Adam find their grave in their mothers' womb, and die before they see the sun. Others peep forth into the light, as it were only to see it; and having by a shriek or two given testimony to the misery of this life, presently die and vanish, and their death treads upon the heels of their birth. Others are ἡμερόβιοι, *creatures of a day's continuance*, and their birth and death are contained within the compass of one rising and setting of the sun. Others live a little longer, but

yet die upon their mothers' breast. Others outlive their infancy, and having prattled and played a while in the world, death on a sudden surprises them, and puts an end to their childish sport. Others arrive to some growth of stature and understanding, and bud forth and promise fair, and are the joy and hope of their parents; but on a sudden (like the child of the Shunamitish woman) the sprightful lad falls sick and dies, and leaves the afflicted parents' gray hairs to follow with sorrow to the grave. Others live to blossom, and arrive to the flower of their age, their youth, but a fever or some violent accident snatches them away; the flower on a sudden fades and withers, and they die in the prime of their years. Others reach the middle age, and their mountain appears strong, and the tree seems to have taken deep root, and there is little doubt but the man will live to a good old age. But, behold! death lays his axe to the root of the tree, the firm oak is cut down, falls, and dies, and the strong man *is taken away in the midst of his days*, as David expresseth it, Psalm cii. 24. But if the days of our years are seventy, nay, *if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we flee away*, as Moses expresseth it, Psalm xc. 10. Threescore or fourscore years make a great noise, and sound high, and whilst they are before us, they look big, and seem to be a long time of duration. But one year steals away after another, and when the whole term is out, we wonder and are vexed at our false arithmetic; the vast number of years seems as a cipher, and the time that is past appears as a dream, yea a mere nothing.

2. To know the measure of our days, or to number our days aright, is to consider the shortness of our life on earth comparatively; and that compared, 1. with God's eternity; 2. compared with our own eternity; 3. compared with the great work and business of our life, the business of religion.

1. To know the measure of our days, is to consider the shortness of this mortal life compared with God's eternity. This is a very humbling and abasing consideration, not only to us mortal men, but even to the angels themselves. And therefore David takes special notice of it in the verse next my text, in these words, *And mine age is as nothing before thee*, i. e. in comparison of thy eternal duration. So Moses, Psalm xc. 4. *A thousand years are but as yesterday in thy sight.* Our age is but an handbreadth in itself; but, compared to eternity, it is not an hair's breadth, yea it is nothing, it bears no proportion.

ETERNITY! O word of a vast comprehension! how doth this world, and the duration of all things therein, vanish and disappear at the very naming of thee! It is impossible to use exact propriety of speech in discoursing of this matter; and therefore we must express ourselves as well as we can. Before we were, there was an infinite space of time, which no finite understanding can reach; and when we die, and shall be no more in this world, an endless eternity of time (if I may so speak) succeeds and follows, in which infinite duration our poor life on earth intervenes, or comes in as an handbreadth, the space of a few minutes, as a small isthmus, or creek of land, between two boundless oceans. In short, our life in this world is but a little point of

time, interposed between an eternity past and an eternity to come. We may quickly lose ourselves and be swallowed up in this profound consideration; and therefore I pass from it to the next, viz.

2. To number our days aright, is to consider the shortness of our life here, compared with our own eternity hereafter. God is eternal *a parte ante*, and *a parte post*, "by an eternity past," (you must still bear with impropriety of speech in this matter,) and "by an eternity to come." There was never any point of time wherein he was not; there shall never be any point of time wherein he shall cease to be. And therefore he is styled in Scripture *Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come*, Rev. i. 8. But as for ourselves, there was a time when we were not. Our register-books will tell us when we began to be and to live. Nay, this world, and all things therein, had a beginning, and there was once nothing in existence besides the Almighty God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the blessed Trinity in Unity, which from all eternity enjoyed itself, as being self-sufficient and perfectly happy in itself, nor at all needing any thing without itself, any created being to add to its felicity. For God made not this world for any essential good that should thereby accrue unto himself; (for all things owe all that they are or have unto him;) but with a design to communicate his goodness to certain beings without himself, which should therefore depend upon him, and adore and glorify him, as the Author and Fountain both of their being and well-being.

Upon this design, in that point of time (if I may have leave so to call it) which the all-wise God saw

most fit and convenient, the eternal Word and Son of God went forth from the Father, by his almighty power to create and make heaven and earth, and all things that are therein. For so we read; *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made,* John i. 1, 2, 3. Of things that God made, some he made only for a temporary use, and to serve the economy or dispensation of this present world, as St. Irenæus somewhere expresses it. In this rank are all the beasts that perish, all trees, plants, and vegetables, nay the earth itself and the heavens as now they are. For all these shall be dissolved, and were made to be dissolved, as the Psalmist assures us, Psalm cii. 25, 26. *Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.* But there are other creatures designed for an eternal duration, as the angels, and we men, in that part of us wherein we are allied to the angels, our souls; which, when our bodies die, still live, till by the power of Christ our bodies also shall be raised again, and reunited to our souls; and then in both we shall become ἰσάγγελοι, *equal to the angels,* that is, as immortal as they. So that though we cannot boast of an eternity behind us, we being as to our particular persons *but of yesterday,* (as holy Job expresseth it,) of little standing, yet we may, nay we must, look upon ourselves as made for an eternity before us.

And then we number our days aright, when we consider our life here, not as the state for which we are finally designed, but only as a short passage to another state, and that eternal. When we think ourselves to be in this world, *non tanquam in domo, sed tanquam in hospitio*, "not as at home, but as it "were in an inn," where we are to lodge but for a while, as in our journey and travel to that which is our home indeed, our long, last, and eternal home. What a mighty influence would this consideration have upon our lives, if we would suffer it often and deeply to enter into our hearts! We should then clearly see what an unaccountable, what an extreme folly and madness it is for a man to be so very solicitous, so mightily concerned about the things of this life, as most men are; who tire and spend themselves in the pursuit of an happiness in this present world, which they can never attain, and if they could attain it, cannot long enjoy it; in the mean while very little, or not at all, thinking of that future state, wherein they must be indeed happy or miserable for ever.

It is impossible for him to be a worldly or wicked man, yea it is impossible but that he should be a very spiritual and holy man, who often and seriously thinks of the shortness of this life, and the eternity of that which is to follow it. O eternity! (may I say again,) how surprising, how awakening are the thoughts of thee! Who so stupid, so senseless, as not to feel a trembling in his loins, when this thought comes into his mind, WHAT IF I SHOULD BE LOST, AND MISCARRY FOR EVER! And yet this great point depends upon our good or ill behaviour in that short space of time which is allotted

us in this present world: which brings me to the consideration of the shortness of our life, compared with the great work and business of it.

3. To number our days aright, is to consider the shortness of our life here compared with the main work and business of our life, the business of religion; for which chiefly God sent us into this world, and by which alone we can be fitted and prepared for eternal happiness in the other. It was the complaint of the physician of old, *vita brevis, ars longa,* that "the physician's life is short, but his art long "and difficult," requiring much time and labour to understand it. The saying, with due explication, may not unfitly be applied to the Christian's life. Our life here is short, but the art of living well is long, difficult, and hard to be learned. It is true, the just and righteous, the good and merciful God, requires no more of us in order to our eternal happiness hereafter, than what he gives us time and power, opportunity and ability, to perform here. But, as we through our own folly generally order the matter, our time proves too short for our work. Deduct the time we spend in sleeping, eating, and drinking, which commonly amounts to at least one half of our time; the time required to the necessary works of our calling, the time we spend in recreation, in unnecessary visits and compliments, in idle company, *vel nihil agendo, vel male agendo,* "in doing either "nothing, or that which is worse that nothing;" and the remainder will appear to be a very slender portion of time; too little, I fear, for the work and business of religion, the main end for which God made us, and sent us into this world.

To improve this argument, we may consider these

two things. 1. That religion is a work, and that a hard and laborious one. 2. That this great work must be done within the compass of this short uncertain life, or we are undone for ever.

1. Religion is a work, and that an hard and laborious one. The whole current of Scripture represents it under this notion to us. So much St. Paul signifies when he exhorts us to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*, Phil. ii. 12. So our Saviour, John vi. 27. *Labour not for that meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life.* But the exhortation of our Saviour is most pressing and emphatical, Luke xiii. 24. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life*, &c. The Greek word is ἀγωνίζεσθε, which signifies *to strive*, as wrestlers in the Olympic games. The work of religion therefore is an hard work, which cannot be performed by us without great striving and struggling. Hence the life of a Christian is compared by St. Paul to a wrestling, 1 Cor. ix. 25. *Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.* In the same chapter he compares the Christian's life to *a race*, ver. 24. and to *a fight*, ver. 26. And so he doth 2 Tim. iv. 7. where he hath both the similitudes of a combat and a race together: *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course.*

It were an easy matter clearly to demonstrate this truth, by unfolding the particulars of the Christian religion. But my allowance of time being but short, I shall briefly touch only on one, which is indeed the sum of all the rest, and that is the work of

mortification. That this is a necessary act of Christian religion appears, because it is expressly required of every Christian, Col. iii. 5. *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection,* &c. Yea that it is required of us *sub periculo animæ,* "as we hope for "salvation," and to escape the wrath to come, we are plainly told, Rom. viii. 13. *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

Now that this act of religion is a great and laborious work, will soon appear to him that considers what it is. It is to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness; to put off those affections which are natural to us, or are rivetted in us by long custom, which is *altera natura,* "a second nature;" to change the whole frame of our dispositions and actions, and to become quite other men than formerly we were. This certainly must be *opus laboriosum et assiduum,* "a long and laborious work."

It is true, Christ saith, that *his yoke is easy, and his burden light.* But to whom? To minds duly disposed to receive it. It is agreeable to our right reason and understanding, and therefore easy to him who is under the government of reason, when raised above his sensual appetites and affections by the grace of God. It is an easy yoke, if it were put on betimes, before evil dispositions and habits be contracted. It will at length be easy to every man that takes it upon him by use and exercise, and the grace of God. But to men corrupted and vitiated by evil habits and customs, which is the case of most men before they undertake the yoke of Christ, it is no such easy thing; it is some time before it

comes to sit evenly and smoothly upon their necks. Nay, to men that have gone on in a very long course and custom of sinning, the yoke of Christ is next to impossible to be borne. So God himself tells us by the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xiii. 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good who are accustomed to do evil.* I shall make this plain by some instances.

Temperance is an easy, yea most delightful virtue; it is agreeable to the reason of man, it preserves the faculties of his soul in their vigour, it conduces to that health of body which is the greatest outward blessing. Yet the habitual glutton or drunkard can sooner die than be temperate in his meat or drink. What more easy, than for a man that is able, to give alms to the indigent and necessitous? what more godlike or delightful virtue, than for a man to see the poor and miserable living upon and rejoicing in his bounty? But from the man who hath given himself to covetousness and the love of money, every alms comes as hardly, as if it were a drop of blood from his heart. What more pleasant, when good men meet together, than freely to discourse of divine matters? But such discourse grates the ears of the carnal man. What more noble pleasure to a generous soul, than the meditation and contemplation of heavenly things? But set a sensual man to this work, and how unpleasant and tedious will it seem to him! What greater pleasure, what greater privilege to a soul duly disposed, than frequent converse with God in prayer? When he is oppressed with the cares and troubles of this life, when he is tired with the vanities of the

world, what ease and satisfaction doth he find in unburdening his soul, and having recourse to his God! But to the man immersed in worldly cares or pleasures, prayer is *opus alienum*, "a strange work," a disagreeable and unpleasant exercise; he is hardly drawn to it, he is frigid and dull in it, he is glad when he is rid of it. The like I might shew you in other instances.

Again, Christ's yoke is easy, if taken together with the reward attending it. If we consider the infinite, endless bliss and happiness wherewith our short and slender service of our blessed Lord in this life shall be recompensed hereafter, all that he requires of us will appear to be a very easy condition, and indeed a very light yoke and burden. In this sense all the afflictions of this life, the bearing whereof is the hardest part of the Christian duty, are said to be light, 2 Cor. iv. 17. *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* And the same apostle again tells us, Rom. viii. 18. *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Nay, I may go yet farther, and affirm, that the law of Christ is an easy yoke, compared with the yoke of sin and Satan. The drudgery of the sinner in the service of sin is greater than the labour of the good man in the service of Christ, as I could easily demonstrate, if it were not too great a digression. It is a certain truth, that wicked men generally undergo more pain and difficulty in going to hell, than good men do in getting to heaven. In

these senses we grant that Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden light.

But they who think that Christianity is an easy thing in this sense, that it complies with their carnal ease, sloth, and negligence, are under a very gross and dangerous mistake. Indeed, as these men have represented the Christian religion to themselves, it is easy enough. If to talk of religion, and to make a show of it, were religion; if it were sufficient to perform some external acts of religion, as going to church when we have nothing else to do, or at those times when we are allowed to do any thing else; if praying now and then when we are in a good humour; if abstinence from some grosser and more infamous vices might serve the turn, these men were not much mistaken. But this is a very false notion of Christianity. The Christian's duty is a work and labour, and that of great difficulty, a labour of the heart, as being employed chiefly in setting the heart aright, in renewing the inward man, in changing our very natures and dispositions, and, in a word, in new moulding our souls to an holy and divine frame and temper, such as the Gospel of Christ sets before us.

So much of the first consideration, that our religion is a great and difficult work, a work of time and labour.

2. We are to consider that this great work must be done within the compass of this short, uncertain life, or we are undone for ever. We should do well often to call to mind the weighty words of our Saviour, John ix. 4. *The night cometh* (i. e. the night of death) *when no man can work.* This is the

night, as St. Austin speaks[c], "wherein no man can "work, but every man shall receive according to "what he hath wrought." To believe in Christ, to repent, to do the works of righteousness, to exercise acts of piety and mercy in order to our acceptance with God, are works proper to the season of this life; when this life is past, the season is gone, and there is no more place for them for ever. Our blessed Saviour plainly teacheth us this in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar, Luke xvi. where he gives us an account but of two sorts of men, the good and the wicked man, and assures us, that presently after death there is a vast gulf fixed between the places or states wherein they are, so that the one cannot pass unto the other; that is, the good man after death can never become miserable, nor the wicked man happy, ver. 26. *Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they that would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.* In the same state wherein we die, we must continue to all eternity. There is no after-game to be played in this case.

The doctrine of purgatory, taught in the church of Rome, is a vile cheat, that hath no foundation at all, either in Scripture, or in the belief of the primitive church; yea is plainly contrary to both. Wherefore, as we love our souls, let us not in the least depend upon it. Let us fix this as a most infallible conclusion, that if death seize upon us before we have repented with a true repentance proceeding from the love of God above all things, there

[c] In qua nemo potest operari, sed recipere quod operatus est.

is no hope, no redemption for us. Then neither our own prayers, nor the tears of others, will do us any good. All dirges and masses for our souls will then be insignificant. All the powers in heaven and earth cannot then help us. Nay our blessed Saviour himself cannot save us, because he hath positively declared he will not. *Behold! now* (whilst we live under the means of grace) *is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation,* 2 Cor. vi. 2.

O that this consideration might enter deeply into our hearts! And that it may so do, let us often direct our thoughts to those wretched miserable souls, that are now in chains of darkness, irrevocably lost and undone for ever. How do they curse their own folly, in neglecting those opportunities of salvation, which we enjoy and they once had, but are now for ever denied! how many worlds, were they in their power, would they give to be where we are, in the house of God, to hear the promises of salvation offered to them, and to call upon God for mercy! how carefully would they frequent the prayers of the church! how fervent would they be in those prayers! how often would they be upon their bended knees in private prayer! how greedily would they embrace all opportunities of salvation, when offered to them; every sacrament they could receive, every sermon they could hear! But, alas! their time is past, and they are excluded from the means of grace and salvation to all eternity. Now be assured, that if thou dost not seasonably repent and turn to God, thy case will very shortly (God knows how soon) be the same with theirs, and thou shalt repent in hell for not repenting here.

I have done with my first observation, which was this: It is a matter of great use and concernment, mightily conducing to the purposes of religion, for a man to know his end, and the number of his days, what it is, i. e. seriously to consider the shortness and uncertainty of his life here on earth.

I have shewn you, that to know the measure of our days, or to number our days aright, is to consider seriously the shortness of our life, 1. absolutely and in itself; 2. comparatively; and that 1. as compared with God's eternity; 2. as compared with our own eternity; 3. as compared with the main work and business of our life, the business of religion.

I pass now to the other observation, which I shall but briefly touch upon, and so conclude. It is this:

II. A due consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of man's life in this world is a gift of God, and the effect of his grace, which therefore we ought by prayer humbly and earnestly to ask of him.

So David doth in my text; *Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days*, &c. One would think this were a needless prayer; for who knows not that he must die, and that the time of his death is uncertain, and yet certainly not far off? And who so brutish as not to consider this? But he must shut his eyes, and never look abroad into the world, that sees not the necessity of this prayer. A spirit of slumber and sottishness is fallen upon the generality of men, so that they seldom or never seriously think of that which so much concerns them. They see many of all ages fall into their graves round about them, and yet they live as if they themselves should never die.

The lesson of our mortality divine Providence doth every day, yea every hour and minute, press and inculcate on us, and as it were beat into us. The funeral bell ever and anon rings in our ears, and we daily tread upon the graves of others. Many of us already find the harbingers of death within us, we all see the triumphs of death without us, and (as our church expresseth it) "in the midst of life we "are in death." Alas! that among so many remembrancers, wherewith Providence hath surrounded us, we should, with that monarch in story, need yet another monitor to tell us every day, "Remember "that thou art mortal." Yet this is our case. What fatal stupidity is it that hath seized on us? hath the frequency of these admonitions made them to lose their force and virtue on us? are we become like sextons or grave-diggers, that by living as it were in the charnel-house, and daily conversing with the bones and sculls of dead men, at last become hardened, and of all mortals are the least apprehensive of their mortality? Or rather are we affectedly ignorant, and do we wilfully put the evil day far from us? Whatever the cause be, the effect is sadly visible.

So that every one of us hath reason to pray with David, *Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am:* and with Moses, *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* We have reason to pray, that God would never suffer us to fall into the folly of the blinded and infatuated world, who never entertain any serious thoughts of death and judgment, of heaven and hell, till death surprises them, till judg-

ment arrests them, till heaven's gates be finally shut against them, and hell swallows them up.

From this infatuation, God of his infinite mercy deliver us, through the merits of his only Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, all adoration and worship, both now and for evermore. *Amen.*

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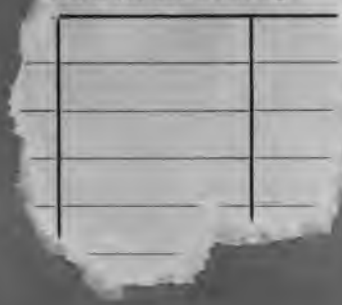
s under no circumstances
ken from the Building